

**LUFTWAFFE COLOURS**  
**Volume Two Section 3**



# JAGDWAFFE

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**BATTLE OF  
BRITAIN**

**Phase Three**

**September-October 1940**





# 1940

## BATTLE OF BRITAIN PHASE THREE

*I now want to take this opportunity of speaking to you, to say this moment is an historic one. As a result of the provocative British attacks on Berlin on recent nights the Führer has decided to order a mighty blow to be struck in revenge against the capital of the British Empire. I personally have assumed the leadership of this attack, and today I have heard above me the roaring of the victorious German squadrons which now, for the first time, are driving towards the heart of the enemy in full daylight, accompanied by countless fighter squadrons. Enemy defences were as we expected beaten down and the target reached, and I am certain that our successes have been as massive as the boldness of our plan of attack and the fighting spirit of our crews deserve. In any event this is an historic hour, in which for the first time the German Luftwaffe has struck at the heart of the enemy.*

*Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, radio broadcast, evening of 7 September.*





## A Change of Plan

**B**y 6 September, the *Luftwaffe* had brought extreme pressure to bear on Britain's air defences. Six of the RAF's seven sector airfields and five advanced airfields had suffered considerable damage and, in the attacks of the 6th itself, aircraft losses again exceeded production. Most significantly, the number of available experienced crews, the RAF's real difficulty, had been reduced to a total of some 700 pilots. The cumulative effect of the preceding weeks of bitter fighting had indeed left the RAF, and 11 Group in particular, very seriously weakened and its situation was critical.

Across the Channel, however, the extent of this weakness was less obvious and for the opposing *Luftwaffe*, victory was not coming quickly enough. Although *Luftwaffe* Intelligence still believed that Fighter Command was down to its last reserves, to the aircrew flying against England resistance seemed as determined as ever. Within the *Luftwaffe* high command, the question of exactly how these remaining fighters were to be destroyed and Britain subjugated was therefore the subject of close examination.

Earlier, on 4 September, Hitler had publicly announced that a new aerial offensive was to be mounted against London. Although this has frequently been described as a retaliatory attack in reply to the RAF's bombing of Berlin – certainly retaliation was never far from Hitler's mind – this was not strictly the case. In fact, the main military objective remained the wearing down of the British fighter forces, although the bombing of London was also intended to erode British economic power and, politically, compel Britain to surrender. Thus the main effect of the RAF's raids on Berlin was that they provided Hitler with justification under international law to carry out similar attacks against London.

**“...while the main objective of wearing down the British fighter forces was *not abandoned*, economic war from the air could be embarked upon with full fury, and the morale of the civilian population subjected at the same time to a heavy strain.”**

*(Emphasis in original) From a lecture given by Hptm. Otto Bechtle, Berlin-Gatow, 2 February 1944 entitled 'German Air Force Operations Against Great Britain. Tactics and Lessons Learnt, 1940-41'*

On 3 September, the day before Hitler's speech, Göring travelled to The Hague (Den Haag) to discuss the details of the planned attack with the commanders of *Luftflotten* 2 and 3. Although both men were very capable and competent officers, he found an acute divergence of opinion existed between *Feldmarschall* Albert Kesselring, the efficient and popular head of *Luftflotte* 2, and his *Luftflotte* 3 counterpart, the unpretentious and unusually energetic *Feldmarschall* Hugo Sperrle.

Kesselring's view was that the most effective method of destroying Fighter Command's last reserves would be to draw them into the air. To achieve this, he believed an attack on central London – a capital city of unparalleled importance to the British nation, the centre of government and the heart of the British Empire – would draw the remaining RAF fighters to its defence and thereby afford the *Jagdwaaffe* its most favourable opportunity to destroy them. Sperrle, far less optimistic, believed that the RAF still had over a thousand aircraft left, far more than stated in the official daily situation reports distributed by the Intelligence Branch, *Luftwaffe* Operations Staff<sup>1</sup>, and that the offensive against the airfields should therefore continue. Kesselring countered this, saying that even if such attacks were effective, Fighter Command would merely withdraw to airfields north of London where, as it was beyond the range of the Bf 109, it would be too dangerous to send the bombers alone.

After considering both arguments, Göring finally agreed with Kesselring, though at his trial in Nuremberg in 1946 he stated he believed Sperrle's plan of continuing the attacks on airfields and aircraft factories would have been more successful. Indeed, had the view of Sperrle prevailed and had the RAF continued to defend its airfields, the loss of pilots may well have brought about the total collapse of Fighter Command. But in view of Hitler's pending speech about retaliation, in which he would state that London was to be attacked immediately, Göring had little alternative but to follow the *Führer's* wishes. According to his testimony at Nuremberg, Göring tried to persuade Hitler to change his mind, but the *Führer* insisted he wanted to have London attacked for political reasons and, once again, the main emphasis of the attack was changed. This was a major factor in the *Luftwaffe* losing the battle over Britain for, by turning the *Kampfgruppen* against London, the RAF was given its badly needed respite and,

1. These reports contained the number of aircraft downed by the *Luftwaffe* and estimated the number of fighter aircraft still presumably available to Fighter Command for home air defence. According to these reports, the RAF's fighter force should have been shot down in its entirety by the beginning of September 1940.



ironically, Fighter Command was saved from possible annihilation by the Führer himself. As Winston Churchill later wrote of this phase of the Battle, *"If the enemy had continued his heavy attack and had disrupted the fighter command centres and their communications facilities, it is quite possible that the entire British Fighter Command could have collapsed, which would have resulted not only in a fairly desperate situation for the city of London, but also the loss for Britain of her air superiority in a decisive area of operations."*

## The Attacks on London

The precise target area for the first massed daylight raid was the Pool of London, the large dock and residential area situated on the north and south banks of the River Thames to the east of the City of London. The bomber force was drawn from the units of *Luftflotte 2* and *Luftwaffe* planning called for all operations against Britain to be concentrated against the capital between 17.00 and 18.00 hrs on 7 September. This daylight attack was to be followed by the largest concentrated night attack yet launched and was to be carried out by *Luftflotte 3* together with those units of *Luftflotte 2* which had not operated during the day.

Although Hitler specifically ordered that deliberate attacks were not to be carried out against London's purely residential areas, he and OKW knew well enough that with the navigational and bombing aids then available it was impossible to ensure that bombs aimed at purely military targets, especially at night, would not fall in the surrounding densely populated areas where the effect on the inhabitants would be considerable. Certainly the casualties and suffering from such damage were considered an additional and desirable effect which would bring further pressure to bear on the British government to surrender, Kesselring, for example, stating that once casualties in London started to mount, the British would be "screaming for peace".

In the two days prior to 7 September, the *Luftwaffe* busied itself preparing for the coming assault which would employ the highest proportion of the bomber force which could be spared, bearing in mind the necessity of maintaining the offensive day by day. Accordingly, the bomber forces of *Luftflotte 2* were strengthened by the arrival of KG 26 and KG 30 which were transferred from *Luftflotte 5*, while Bf 109 and Bf 110 fighter units were moved to locations closer to the French coast. On the 5th and 6th, therefore, only small numbers of bombers were employed in attacks against Britain and even on the day of the attack, there was little activity until the forces selected for the attacks began to assemble. There was some reconnaissance activity off the east coast and overland during the morning and there was also a fighter sweep over East Kent by some 50 fighters, during which a dozen Bf 109 fighter-bombers lightly attacked Hawkinge, but otherwise the day was peculiarly quiet.

The first signs of attack began at 15.45 hrs, when one of the German fighter formations which were constantly patrolling the Straits of Dover made a swift incursion near New Romney, a sure sign that something was afoot. Ten minutes later, the first of three forces of over 15

Do 17s, almost certainly from KG 76, during their bombing run to West Ham on the evening of 7 September.





## September-October 1940



A German reconnaissance photograph taken from 7,000 metres of the Silvertown area of London following the raids on 7 September. A Luftwaffe photo-interpreter has marked the location of several large fires burning around the Royal Albert, King George V and Royal Victoria Docks (marked 2 and 3). To the left, just out of view in this photograph, is the characteristic U-bend of the Thames, known in Germany as "der Ellbogen des Themse", literally the "the Thames Elbow".

aircraft was detected near Cap Gris-Nez. Another was detected a little later ten miles out from Dunkerque on a course for the Thames Estuary, and a third was detected between Boulogne and St. Omer on a westerly course. Soon afterwards, a force of 20 plus was detected off Dunkerque. It came straight across the northern entrance of the Straits of Dover and with one other force constituted the northern arm of the German attack. Because the German forces went to considerable lengths to conceal for as long as possible the direction of their attack, it was extremely difficult for the British controllers to clearly appreciate the situation and, understandably, they assumed that the targets would again be Fighter Command's airfields. Accordingly, some squadrons were sent to patrol north-eastern Kent and the Thames estuary while others were sent into the air and held near London.

As more forces were plotted, it became obvious that the *Luftwaffe* was about to attack on a wide front from Beachy Head to the North Foreland, and still *Staffel* after *Staffel* continued to rise into the air, form up and head out across the Channel. Soon forces representing many hundreds of aircraft had been detected yet, despite the clear weather, tracking the enemy forces left much to be desired. Throughout the operation, enemy tracks were disappearing and re-appearing, confusing the controllers on the ground.

The battle began in earnest at about 17.00 hrs when a large German force of about 80 bombers in three formations, each heavily escorted by fighters, flew up the River Thames towards London. The Thames and Medway AA guns opened fire, beginning a period of intense action which was to last for over an hour. However, as most of the defending squadrons had been sent to cover their airfields, the route to London was virtually clear of effective opposition and three targets at Woolwich were all hit and heavily damaged in a very successful attack. As this force withdrew, it was engaged by at least seven RAF squadrons, but while the British fighters were so occupied, other bombers were already bombing or approaching to bomb London. At least two bomber formations were already over east London and had bombed an oil tank farm at Thameshaven and the dock areas on the north bank of the river at West Ham. Although these bombers were attacked, it was only by one squadron which did not arrive until the enemy was withdrawing.



But even these forces were of little consequence compared with the second series of attacks which, detected at 17.15 hrs, converged upon London from three points on the coast. At 17.20 hrs, 60 aircraft crossed the coast and flew towards London, followed at intervals of a few minutes by a large force of 50 or more aircraft and another of unknown strength. Although each prong of the attack was engaged shortly after it crossed the coast, most of the German aircraft reached their targets and between 17.45 and 18.10 hrs, the main weight of the German day attack fell on the capital. The main targets were distributed amongst the riverside boroughs east of London, and it was here that the heaviest damage was caused to domestic, commercial, and industrial property. Most of the bombs fell on the Surrey Commercial docks, the Millwall docks, West Ham and Barking, where many of the great dock facilities lining both banks of the Thames were hit and burned with furious intensity throughout the evening, that night and all the following day. In addition there was heavy damage at Purfleet, Grays Thurrock and Thameshaven, chiefly to oil storage tanks where tremendous fires were started. The Vickers works at Crayford was hit, Brentford was bombed, and in London itself there were incidents as far north as Tottenham and as far south at Croydon. Although the dock installations were the main target, inevitably there were civilian casualties in this densely populated area.

The last attack was carried out shortly after 18.00 hrs and whereas some of the targets, notably oil farms and docks, were of obvious military importance, again the bombing affected some of the poorest and most crowded districts in London. Heavy concentrations of high explosive and incendiary bombs fell in East Ham, Silvertown, Barking and nearby districts, blasting and burning dozens of working-class streets. This was the last episode of the *Luftwaffe's* day operations but the planned attack was not yet over, for in the evening the bombers returned.

Due to the dangers of collision, the night bombing of London – the first instance of night attacks being integrated with *Luftwaffe* efforts during the day – was not carried out in formation but by a continuous procession of single aircraft all following the same route. *Luftflotte* 3 had provided none of the bombers for the day attack, but of the 250 aircraft which were over London at night, 174 were from *Luftflotte* 3. The immensity of London, its nearness to the German bases and, above all, the fires already burning as a result of the day attacks, all facilitated accurate navigation and concentrated bombing so that more than 90% of the bombs dropped in the night attack fell within ten miles of Charing Cross. According to German estimates, they dropped 333 tonnes of high-explosive and over 13,000 incendiaries on the capital, slightly more than during the attacks by day. The bombs rained down across London's East End, Battersea and the Thames Estuary, the worst devastation occurring in Silvertown and the Surrey Commercial and West India docks where over 1,000 fires raged including nine conflagrations each requiring the attention of 100 fire engines. London was suffering a terrible penalty for Hitler's change of strategy. As the last German bomber flew homeward at about 04.30 hrs on 8 September, more than 300 civilians had been killed and 1,600 severely injured in the day and night attacks of 7/8 September. For the people who lived in London's eastern boroughs this was the first of many such nights. The *Blitz* on London had begun and, with a single exception, would continue for 76 consecutive nights.

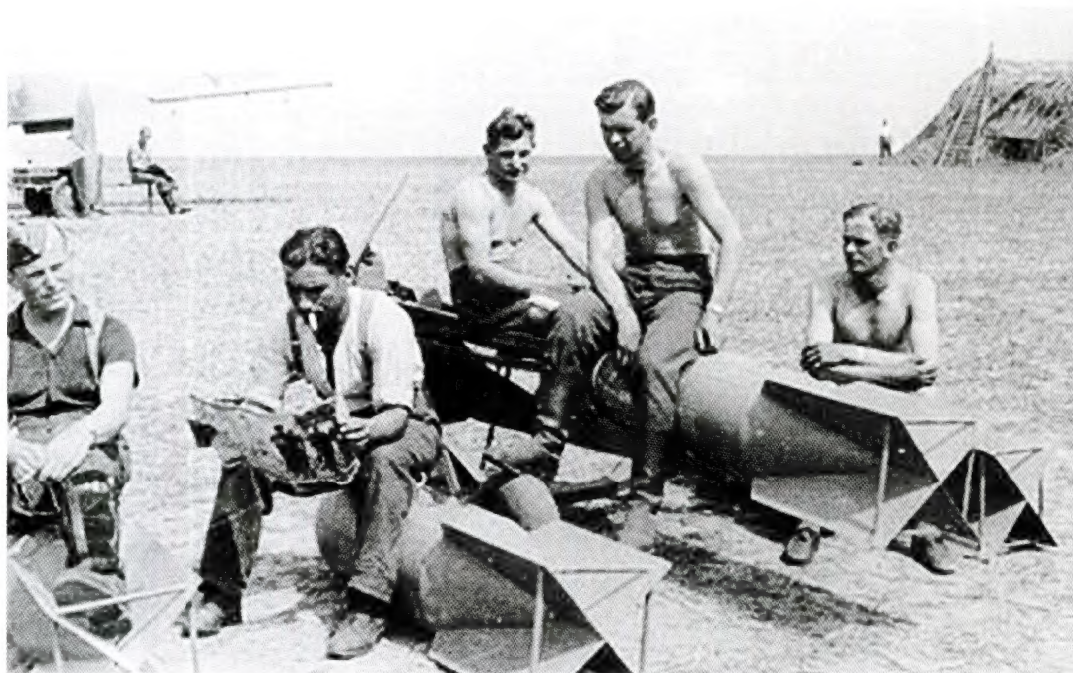
Analysis of the day's events presents a number of interesting features, the most obvious of which is that in striking its first heavy blow at London, the *Luftwaffe* had reached the capital and bombed it successfully, thus opening a battle which was to continue for many days and nights. London could not lightly suffer many more attacks of the same weight and accuracy. Secondly, because the Germans were converging upon one target for an hour and a half and made no attempt to evade

Hermann Göring, Der Reichsmarschall des Grossdeutschen Reiches und Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe, (Reichsmarschall of the Pan-German Reich and Commander in Chief, Luftwaffe) and other senior military officers, on the French coast. On 7 September 1940, the Reichsmarschall occupied a similar position as his bomber and fighter formations passed overhead to carry out the first mass attack on London.





*RIGHT:* Personnel of 2./Erp.Gr. 210 at Denain. Seated reading is Uffz. Balthasar Aretz who took part in the Gruppe attack on the Supermarine works at Woolston, Southampton, on 11 September.



*BELOW:* Without the skill and dedication of the ground crews, the achievements of the Jagdflieger would not have been possible. Often working under near-impossible conditions, the 'Black Men' (so-called on account of the colour of their denim overalls) ensured that aircraft were serviced and repaired as quickly as possible. Here, an armourer poses with a belt of 7.9 mm ammunition.



*ABOVE:* Luftwaffe armourers loading belted 7.9 mm ammunition into the ammunition tanks of a Bf 110. Each tank had a capacity of 1,000 rounds and once filled was located in the open recesses seen on the nose of the aircraft in the background, one tank being needed for each of the aircraft's four MG 17s. This particular machine belonged to Erp.Gr. 210.





interception once they had crossed the coast, a much higher proportion of the defending RAF squadrons had made contact than in the *Luftwaffe*'s earlier operations against different and dispersed targets. However, the RAF's plan of meeting the enemy between the coast and the sector stations near London with strong fighter formations was not achieved. Instead, the major part of the defensive effort was employed against the first and less important of the German attacks so that when the second wave developed, twelve squadrons which had already been in action against the first wave were scattered or in the process of returning to their bases.

The failure of the RAF to employ strong formations of fighters threw into prominence the high degree of fighter protection given to the German bombers. Large fighter escorts had been encountered earlier in the battle, but never before had the RAF pilots reported with such unanimity such numbers of fighters, nor such difficulty in reaching the German bombers. Vastly outnumbered by the escort fighters in the huge air battles which developed, British fighter losses for the day totalled 26 aircraft with 13 pilots killed or missing. In comparison, total German aircraft losses were 41, of which 16 were Bf 109s with the pilots of 11 of these being taken prisoner.

In their attacks against the massive German formations, the RAF discovered that to frustrate the defending fighters the *Luftwaffe* had adopted new tactics involving a greater approach altitude and, in addition to the *freie Jagd* sweeps, accompanying fighters were divided into two parts forming direct and indirect escorts. Until new tactics were developed to overcome them, the German escorts were very effective in holding off the British fighters.

The appearance of contrails – water vapour in the engine exhaust freezing into ice crystals – was a relatively new phenomenon, the cause of which was, at first, not understood by the general public. Later, scenes such as this, photographed after an air battle in early September 1940, became commonplace.

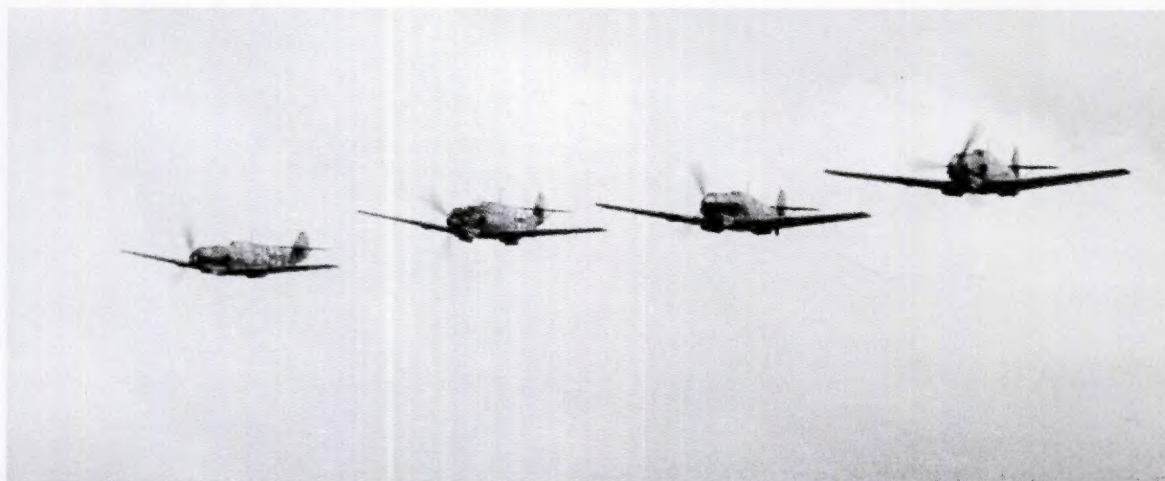
***“When we escorted the first sorties against London it rained Spitfires and Hurricanes. Because the bombers flew quite slowly we constantly had to dance backwards and forwards in order to stay with them. If they made a sharp left or right turn (we) broke away and had to get back to the bombers because the English fighters immediately went for the gaps.”***

*Recollection of Fritz Losigkeit, former Staffelführer of 2./JG 26.*

In the following days, a deterioration in the weather prevented any follow-up attacks on the same scale as those launched on the 7th. On 8 September, the main effort was conducted only by some 30 Do 17s of II. and III./KG 2 which took off to attack the suburbs and airfields south of London. Crossing the Kent coast shortly before midday, they were immediately attacked by four squadrons of Hurricanes. On this occasion the fighter escort was positioned too high, but only one Dornier fell before the escort could intervene. In the ensuing battle, one of the Bf 109s from I./JG 53 was also shot down.



A Schwarm of Bf 109s. In this view the aircraft have closed up for the benefit of the camera but would normally have been well spaced out in what has become known as the 'Finger Four' formation. The Schwarm would then fly as two Rotten, or loose pairs, with 200 metres separating each aircraft. Such a formation allowed the pilots to maintain position and scan greater areas of sky, this giving them an advantage over RAF pilots who, for much of the Battle, flew close together in rigid formations and spent more time concentrating on keeping station than in observing the surrounding airspace.



On 9 September, there was little daylight activity until the early evening when a large force, consisting of Ju 88s from KG 30 and He 111s from KG 53 with their fighter escorts, approached the capital but was largely broken up before reaching the target. Some 30 bombers succeeded in reaching the centre of the city and in bitter fighting between attackers and defenders over the south-western suburbs, bombs were scattered over London and the surrounding countryside. In all, Jagdwaffe casualties amounted to the loss of four Bf 110s and 12 Bf 109s. Of the latter, five pilots were lost, six taken prisoner and one rescued from the Channel by the *Seenotdienst*.

An improvement in the weather allowed a return of the large formations during the mid-afternoon of 11 September when a carefully timed major raid by formations from *Luftflotte 2* headed towards London. Determined opposition by nine defending RAF squadrons blunted the attack but major damage was caused in some areas of the city. Simultaneously, bomber aircraft attacked Portsmouth and nine Bf 110s and four Bf 109s from *Erprobungsgruppe 210*, temporarily operating under *Luftflotte 3*, headed for the Supermarine works at Southampton. With a Bf 110 escort drawn from V./LG 1, ZG 2 and III./ZG 76, plus 26 Bf 109 Es from JG 2, I. and II./JG 27 and JG 53, *Erp.Gr. 210* reached the Southampton area shortly after 16.00 hrs but attacked Eastleigh airport and the Cunliffe-Owen factory in error. *Luftwaffe* casualties for the day included seven Bf 110s and five Bf 109s, but the RAF had suffered far greater single-engined fighter losses which totalled 25 aircraft plus 11 pilots killed and another 11 wounded.

*Luftwaffe* activity on 12 September was again on a reduced scale owing to poor weather covering most of the south-east of Britain. On the 13th bombing activity throughout the day was concentrated on the London area where damage was spread over a wide area.

On 14 September, the two main attacks of the day were directed against London, the first with 150 aircraft and the second with 100 aircraft. Hampered by poor weather and the intermittent heavy jamming of four of the CH stations, only a small number of the defending fighters successfully intercepted the German formations and *Jagdwaffe* casualties for the day amounted to three Bf 109s, all lost on the missions to London. JG 26, flying again after two days spent on the ground due to the earlier poor weather, carried out two sweeps over London in support of the bombers but lost *Obt.* Kurt Dähne of *Stab I./JG 26* when his Bf 109 E-1 was attacked and exploded over Kent. *Fw.* Heinz Ettler of 1./JG 77 forced landed near Detling where his aircraft caught fire and burned out, and *Uffz.* Valentin Blazejewski from 6.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 was on his way home after escorting bombers to London when he became involved in a dogfight with Spitfires. After firing on a Spitfire, Blazejewski was immediately himself attacked and hit from behind by another Spitfire, forcing him to bale out over Ashford. Thirteen RAF aircraft were lost, *Obt.* Joachim Müncheberg, *Staffelkapitän* of 7./JG 26, claiming his 20th victory and *Hptm.* Rolf Pingel, *Gruppenkommandeur* of I./JG 26, his 15th, these kills earning both men the award of the coveted Knight's Cross.

***"This is the date after which I believe Hitler's chances will rapidly dwindle. The weather holds good in a miraculous manner but there are faint premonitory puffs of wind from the south-west and a chill in the air. Dispatches received through Switzerland say that there are the beginnings of a press campaign in Germany breaking news to the people that England is to be subdued by blockade and bombing. If this is true, Hitler is on the downgrade. I can't for the life of me puzzle out what the Germans are up to. They have great air power and yet are dissipating it in fruitless and aimless attacks all over England. They must have an exaggerated idea of the damage they are doing and the effects of their raids on public morale..."***

*Raymont Lee, United States Military Attaché in London, 15 September 1940.*

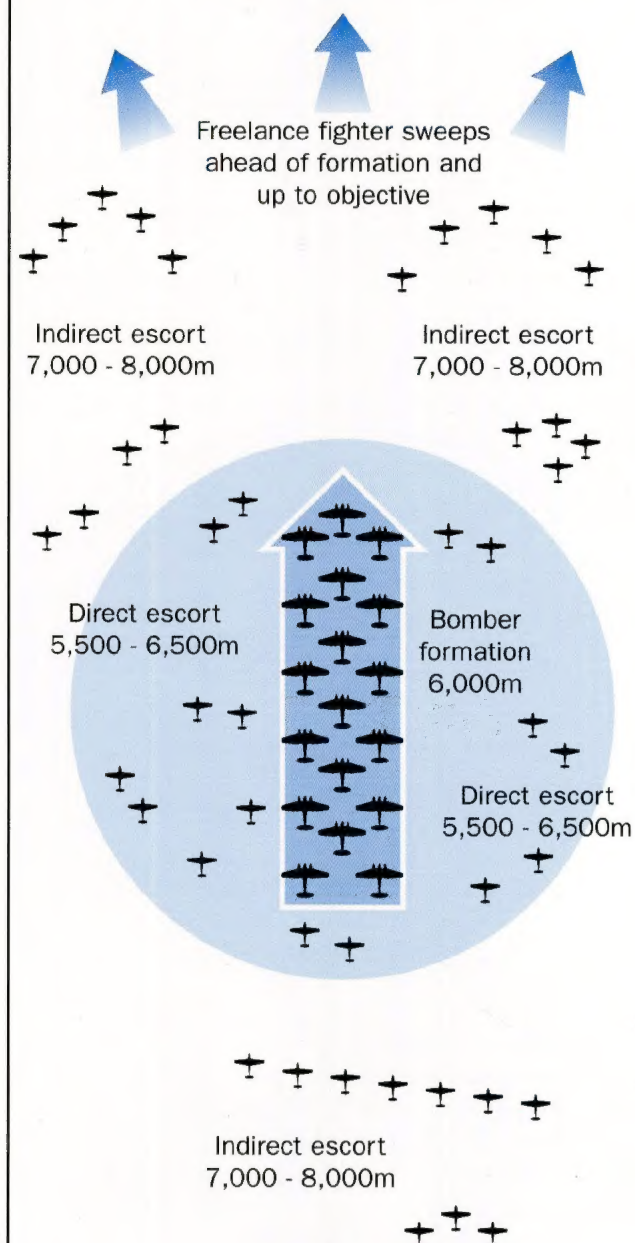


## Fighter Escort Tactics

At the beginning of the daylight attacks against Great Britain, the principle of providing the bomber formations with the minimum necessary fighter escort was generally accepted in order that the majority of fighters were left free to pursue their real task of destroying the enemy in open combat. In the early days of the air war against Great Britain, however, it soon became evident that the British fighter pilots were making operations by bomber units so difficult that it became necessary to provide stronger fighter escort.

By September 1940, the *Luftwaffe* had developed two types of escort. One was **direct escort**, with fighters flying above, behind and at the sides of the bombers. Fighter formations assigned to escort sorties were split up into *Rotten*, or pairs, and due to their greater speed, found it necessary to weave among and around the bombers in order not to become separated. The ratio of fighters to bombers was at least one fighter per bomber, although it was not unusual for a single bomber *Gruppe* to have an entire fighter *Geschwader* as direct escort. Fighters to the sides and above positioned themselves generally abreast of the bombers.

### FULL ESCORT FOR BOMBER FORMATION ON DAY OPERATIONS



Providing fighter escort for bomber formations, such as this group of He 111s, proved one of the most difficult tasks for the Jagdgeschwader. Considerable discipline was required, and the fighters found it difficult to remain with the slower bombers without weaving. However, each weave carried the fighters away from the immediate vicinity of the bombers and made the bomber crews more nervous and more insistent in their demands that the fighter escort stay close to them.

The second type of escort was **indirect escort**, or *Erweiterte Schütz*. These fighters flew some distance from the main formation, but within visual contact, to engage early any attacks before they could properly develop. If the attack came from the right-hand side, the right escort would turn to engage the attackers. At the same time, the escort from above would take up position to the right and those on the left moved to the top position. Against an attack from behind, the rear escorts would turn through 180 degrees and the two outside formations would move to the rear. Against an attack from above, the side formations climbed and as soon as the attackers passed, turned off to follow them.

For a short while, the use of *freie Jagd* sweeps combined with direct and indirect escorts proved very effective, but once Fighter Command adopted the tactic of using its Spitfire and Hurricane squadrons in pairs – the Spitfires to engage the escorts while the Hurricanes attacked the bombers – bomber losses again began to increase and serious differences of opinion arose between the *Luftwaffe*'s bomber and fighter arms concerning the most effective form of escort.



# September-October 1940

*RIGHT:* This Bf 109 E-1 struggled back to the French coast on its last remaining drops of fuel, but was unable to reach its airfield and forced landed on the beach, Summer 1940.



*ABOVE AND RIGHT:* Ground personnel attending to Bf 109 E-3 'White 4' of 1./JG 27 at Guines, September 1940. Led by Oblt. Karl-Wolfgang Redlich, one of the worst days for this Staffel occurred on 18 September when a pilot was killed in a take-off accident at Cherbourg-West airfield and Oblt. Rudolf Krafftich was killed by British fighters near London. Although some of Krafftich's personal possessions (his watch and some coins) were later excavated from the crash site, the pilot's remains were never found.







*ABOVE:* Oblt. Carl-Hans Röders, the Staffelführer of 9./JG 2, flying his 'Yellow 1' at low level during the Summer of 1940. Röders was killed in action on 23 June 1941.



*ABOVE AND RIGHT:* Aircraft of 9./JG 2 at Calais during September 1940.





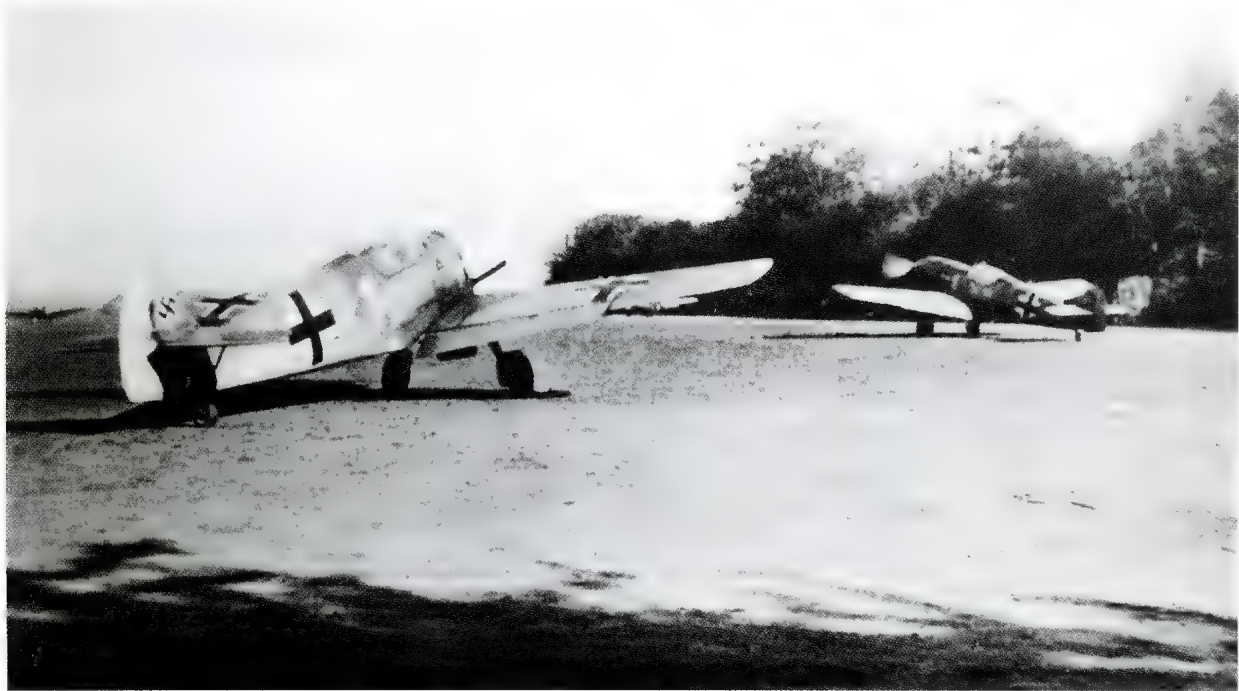
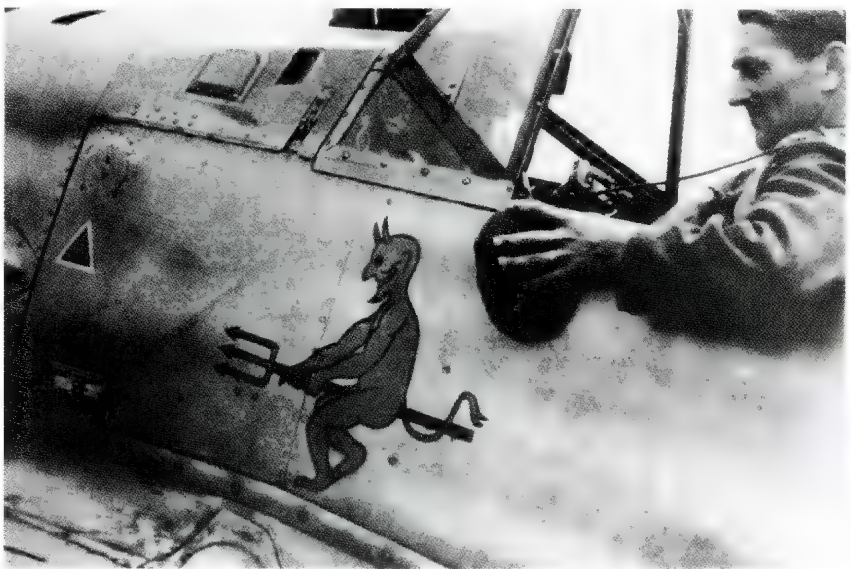


*LEFT:* Tense personnel of Stab/JG 54 anxiously await the return of an overdue pilot. In the foreground left, still wearing his life jacket is Oblt. Pichon-Kalau von Hofe, Hptm. der Reserve Waldhausen, and the Kommodore, Major Hannes Trautloft. Several members of the ground staff are in the background. The missing pilot, Oblt. Otto Kath, had become separated from his Schwarm during a mission over England but eventually returned unharmed.

*BELOW:* A pilot of 2./JG 54 at readiness, this photograph clearly showing the position of the Staffel emblem. The object in the pilot's left hand is his Model LKp N 101 lightweight flying helmet. Except for leather earpieces and leather reinforcing strip across the forehead, this helmet was largely of net construction for comfort in hot weather. The electrical lead visible in the photograph was attached to the back of the helmet.



The Devil on a Pitchfork emblem of 2./JG 54.



*LEFT:* During the Battle of Britain, JG 54 was stationed on various airfields near Calais; the Geschwaderstab and I. Gruppe at Campagne, II. Gruppe in Harlinghem (later at Campagne) and III. Gruppe at Guines where these Bf 109s of 9./JG 54 were photographed on 3 September taxiing from the dispersal area to the take-off position.





*ABOVE:* Such was the limited endurance of the standard Bf 109 E that after a sortie to Southern England, many aircraft barely managed the return flight across the Channel. This Bf 109 E-1 from 5./JG 54 has been retrofitted with a capped spinner. The Gruppe emblem was 'handed' so that the head of the lion always faced the nose of the aircraft. A close-up view (*RIGHT*) of the II./JG 54 emblem. A black rectangle was first applied to the aircraft, then the red sections added. The white detail was then sprayed through a single stencil to ensure a quick yet neat finish.



## **Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-1 of 5./JG 54**

'Black 4', a Bf 109 E-1 of 5./JG 54 was photographed after forced landing in sand dunes during the late Summer of 1940. Repainted in an 02/71 upper scheme, the sides of the fuselage carried a mixed 02/71 mottle while the underside 65 wrapped unevenly around the leading edges of the wings and tailplane. The aircraft was fitted with the later, heavier framed canopy and a rear-view mirror. The cowlings were yellow and the spinner, painted half-white and half 70, was fitted with a red nose cap. The 'Lion of Aspern' emblem of II./JG 54 was carried beneath the windscreen on both sides of the fuselage.





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*ABOVE AND BELOW:* 'Yellow 10' of 9./JG 52 after a landing accident. Note the size of the fuselage markings, the number and the III. Gruppe symbol being larger and thicker than usual. The bracket for the rear-view mirror is typical of the pattern seen on a number of JG 52's aircraft. III./JG 52 was the first Gruppe of JG 52 to fly missions against England. The losses suffered were so high, including the Kommandeur and three Staffelkapitäne, that at the end of July 1940 the unit was recalled to Germany where these photographs are believed to have been taken.





# Franz von Werra

## Authors' Introduction

If there was one pilot of the Second World War as well known to the Allies as in his homeland, it was certainly *Hauptmann* Franz von Werra. Referred to by one side as "The Red Baron" and the other as "The King of Escapers", his memory has been perpetuated in many post-war accounts. We were recently able to contact *Hptm.* von Werra's nephew, *Dr.* Franz von Werra, who kindly placed at our disposal files relating to Franz von Werra's life. Thanks to these files, testimonies from former comrades, and the discovery of other documents in the US National Archives in Washington, the life of this pilot can be described in detail.

## A Humble Beginning

Born on 13 July 1914 in Leuck, Switzerland, Franz von Werra was the seventh and last child of a famous, but poor, family. At the beginning of the century, the aristocratic family name did not protect *Baron* Leo von Werra, Franz's father, from financial ruin. Indeed, the family's destitution was so severe that not all mouths could be fed and the *Baron* was forced to entrust three of his children to distant German relatives. The two youngest children, Emma-Charlotte and Franz-Xaver were given to the childless von Haber family who, without their knowledge, bestowed their family name upon them and, on 26 August 1917, the children became German nationals.

At first, their new lives seemed like a fairytale; they lived in a castle where the family held grand functions; they mixed with the nobility, the rich and the powerful and Franz-Xaver received a superior education, attending good schools in Sigmaringen and Cologne. But in the early 1930s, inflation gradually eroded the family wealth. Indeed, in 1932, Franz-Xaver noted in his diary that an egg cost nine million Marks, and the von Habers had to adjust to a new way of life. It was at this time, too, that the 18 year-old Franz learned that he had been legally deprived of the von Werra surname. This discovery and the economic situation in Germany prompted Franz-Xaver to run away from home and, in September, he stowed away on a freighter sailing from Hamburg to the USA. However, he was soon discovered and, in order to pay for his passage, was put to work in the ship's boiler room. Eventually returned to Germany in December, he was relieved to find that his family was so happy to see him again that he was not reprimanded.

In 1934, after training for a few weeks as a garage mechanic and reverting to his own family name, Franz von Werra entered the Army for military service but later explained, *"As I only want to serve with the most modern equipment, I volunteered for the Luftwaffe. First I was in Werder and had to wait several months before I was accepted into the Air Force. To fly became my new dream. I could glide in the hills of Borken. It is there that I passed my first tests and had my first crash. To the great surprise of my comrades, I escaped from the remains of the sailplane uninjured"*.

Still destitute, Franz von Werra had to borrow money from his sister in order to purchase his first officer-candidate's uniform. His training was completed in November 1938 and, newly promoted to *Leutnant*, von Werra was posted to JG 131. In March 1939 von Werra was seriously injured in a flying accident and subsequently grounded pending a medical examination to determine his fitness for further flying duties. His convalescence was spent with his fiancée, Elfi Traut, in Innsbruck. Then, in mid-August, he received a telegram ordering him to urgently rejoin his unit which had since moved to East Prussia. Conveniently forgetting his medical ban, von Werra insisted on flying a Messerschmitt 109 to demonstrate that he was perfectly fit and on 31 August the ban was lifted, just in time for him to participate in the invasion of Poland which began the following day. Soon afterwards, he wrote: *"On 1 September, my Staffel carried out four missions over Poland ... When we could not find any enemy aircraft, we concentrated on ground targets near Graudenz and Mlava. Finally, we were sent to harass retreating enemy troops, thus preventing them from undertaking defensive actions... [...] With our own infantry no more than 40 kilometres from Warsaw, my squadron learned today (8/9/39) that it is to be withdrawn from the front and given a new task: the defence of the North German coast against English bombers"*.

On 26 September, Franz von Werra's *Gruppe* intercepted a British bomber formation, but in spite of a long, wheeling combat, the Messerschmitts were unable to manoeuvre into a favourable position to shoot down any bombers before they escaped into neutral Holland. However, the unit did not have to wait long for its first success and on 11 October von Werra wrote, *"We are responsible for the capture of the British airmen which was announced in the press. The pilot baled out of his*



Franz von Werra, pictured here in front of one of his Russian victories after his escape and return to active service with I./JG 53 on the Eastern Front.



*burning aircraft and this Oberleutnant (Flying Officer) is the only member of the crew who is not seriously burned. We smoke English cigarettes with him and try to comfort him in spite of the death of one of his comrades, another officer. Afterwards, he was taken for questioning".*

As may be seen from the following letter which Lt. Von Werra wrote to his sister on 24 January, 1940, he was clearly impressed with the success of the *Wehrmacht* and influenced by German propaganda: *"As with the infantry and the navy, we have the best equipment and are commanded by the most capable and most courageous officers. To be able to contribute to the inevitable victory as a front-line officer and pilot fills me with unlimited pride".*

## In the West

About fifteen days after writing this letter, Lt. Franz von Werra was posted to the staff of II./JG 3, a new unit then in the process of being formed. The II. *Gruppe* was created at Zerbst on 1 February 1940, under the command of *Hptm.* Erich von Selle, and Franz von Werra was assigned the position of *Gruppen Adjutant*. Here he became a firm friend of Lt. Heinrich Sannemann, the Technical Officer, who was also attached to the *Gruppenstab* and the two became so inseparable that colleagues referred to them as 'Max and Moritz', two contemporary cartoon characters.

At Zerbst, the pilots of II. *Gruppe* grew impatient, for whereas the majority of the fighter units had been in action since the first hours of *Westfeldzug* (the Western Campaign) on 10 May, II./JG 3 remained in the Berlin area to defend the capital. Finally, on 19 May, the unit was at last sent to the front, taking off from Zerbst at 12.32 hrs. With an intermediate stop at Lippstadt the *Gruppe* finally landed at 17.32 hrs on the small runway of Philippeville, south-east of Charleroi, in Belgium. The *Gruppe* was in action as early as the following day when, shortly before 16.30 hrs it intercepted five Hurricanes and claimed to have destroyed them all. *Hptm.* Erich von Selle claimed two, the first at 16.27 hrs being confirmed by Lt. Max-Bruno Fischer and the second, not witnessed, at 16.29 hrs. *Oblt.* Wilfried Schmidt, the future *Ritterkreuzträger*, claimed one at 16.27, Lt. Franz von Werra one at 16.29 and Lt. Rudolf Heymann another at 16.30 hrs. (It seems that despite confirmation, none of the victories claimed by von Selle, the *Gruppenkommandeur*, were officially recorded by the RLM). In a letter to his sister, von Werra said of his first *Luftsieg*: *"The English are very sporting. Yesterday, for example, I shot down a lone fighter which attacked the head of our armoured columns. I could only hit him after one infernal hedgehopping chase. It crashed into a block of houses in Arras and burst into flames. We spend eight hours per day in our machines".* However, it is interesting to note that von Werra chose not to mention in his letter the fact that he had been saved from a dangerous situation by Lt. Heymann who shot down a Hurricane which had latched onto von Werra's tail.

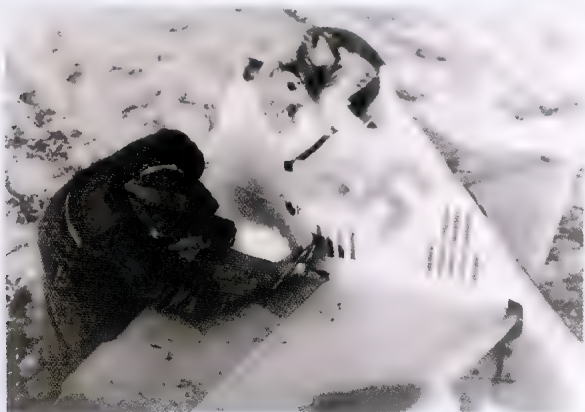
Although the *Gruppe* now had its first victories, it also experienced its first loss. A few seconds before the *Kommandeur* scored his first victory, Lt. Peter Wisser of 5./JG 3 had been shot down near Arras and killed.

Based on the aerodromes at Cambrai on 22 May, and Mount Ecouvez on the 24th, II./JG 3 was constantly in action, the *Gruppe* flying many sorties and the pilots claiming a great number of victories. In correspondence with his family, von Werra gave an account of a British fighter shot down on the 23rd and of two French bombers on the 24th. However, it has proved impossible to locate any documentary proof of these statements and they should, therefore, be treated with caution, although one source mentions two Bréguet 690s shot down at 12.36 and 12.52 hrs on 22 May. Similarly, there is no trace in official files of another claim von Werra mentioned in a letter in which he wrote, *"On 25 May I shot down the leader of a formation of 24 fighters. Then I had to make a difficult escape and the rest of the formation became so angry at the loss of the leader that I was unable to observe if my victim had been able to bale out... My mechanic is proud of our machine, the rudder of which carries the most victory bars of the Gruppe".* In fact, it would appear that the only



ABOVE AND TOP: Franz von Werra realised very early in his flying career that in order to become famous he first had to be noticed. Hence the lion cub, which he named 'Simba'.

BELOW: von Werra's pet lion cub 'Simba' watches intently as a member of the ground crew adds further Abschussbalken to the tail of one of the Gruppe's Bf 109s. After von Werra was shot down over England, 'Simba' was adopted by the Staffel





confirmed victory for II./JG 3 on this date was awarded to Uffz. Anton Gremm of 4./JG 3 who shot down a Potez-63 which crashed in *Wehrmacht*-occupied territory near St Quentin at 20.40 hrs. On 3 June, von Werra claimed a Morane fighter and was awarded the EK I, later writing that he is the first pilot of his *Gruppe* to be so decorated.

## Missions Against England

On 6 June, II./JG 3 arrived at Valheureux and flew many bomber escort sorties as well as flying several *freie Jagd* missions in the Beauvais area. Between 13-22 June, the unit was based at Doudeville, Escarpain and Le Havre, and on the 23rd, von Werra wrote, *"This morning, we arrived at Calais in order to undertake, as of tomorrow, missions against England. I am delighted already by the opposition that these excellent British pilots will offer... But, we also have considerable experience"*.

However, von Werra had to wait before being engaged with British fighters as, immediately following the armistice in France, the pilots of II./JG 3 were rested. The inseparable 'Max and Moritz' took advantage of this opportunity to go touring and von Werra bought (or requisitioned) for the purpose a superb red American car. Thus von Werra and his friend travelled the Benelux countries and a large part of France from Paris to Grenoble, the trip made easier by the baron's excellent French.



Simba and Von Werra inspecting a Bf 109 E-4. After von Werra was shot down, Simba was adopted by the Staffel until the lion cub died on 13 December 1940.

*I was flying as the Kommandeur's wingman as part of the Stabsschwarm when we attacked a formation of about 20 Hawker Hurricanes. Their formation and then ours dispersed and we fought individually. I was involved in a dog-fight with a Spitfire belonging to a second unit which attacked us just after the start of the combat. The Englishman hit my aircraft, destroying my radio. We lost a great deal of altitude while manoeuvring into a firing position and had descended to 2000 metres before I finally managed to take aim. My adversary was hit and immediately dived. I plunged behind him while firing more bursts, but he did not pull out and crashed three kilometres west of Rochester.*

*Flying again in the direction of the mouth of the Thames at very low altitude, I noticed six single-engined aircraft on my left. They had their landing gear down and were in a curve, preparing to land. I looked hard and saw ahead and below them a runway half hidden by a cloud of dust. Another formation was landing. At this time, I was only 300-500 metres behind the first group I had seen, so I also put my landing gear down and, with my engine throttled back, positioned myself behind the last aircraft which I identified as a Hurricane. As I circled over the runway like the seventh machine in the landing pattern, I could leisurely observe the airfield's dispersal area with aircraft parked under small trees to the west of the runway. I did not see any anti-aircraft defences. "My" formation began to land. As the first three machines lined up towards the runway and lost altitude, I retracted my wheels, opened up my engine and fired a burst at the aircraft immediately ahead of me. Instantaneously, it fell on fire. Manoeuvring, I placed myself behind the second Englishman and easily shot him down in flames.*

*I continued to fly in the direction of the runway and then made a climbing turn to gain altitude, finally firing into the dispersal where I could just see the rudder tips of some Hurricanes protruding above the tops of their blast pens. I fired at the first aircraft, but my height did not enable me to aim at the rest. A little further away I saw a bowser with two Hurricanes parked on its right and another on its left. I fired at the bowser which exploded, setting fire to all three aircraft. Keeping at low altitude I made a half-turn away from the installations before carrying out a further attack. This time I tried to destroy the aircraft parked in the blast pens but was unable to observe any hits. The anti-aircraft defences were practically non-existent, with only a few machine-guns opening fire, but I dived towards them and forced the troops to run for shelter. I made two more attacks from different directions and set another aircraft on fire in its pen. That made five Hurricanes on fire on the airfield. A tent (undoubtedly reserved for aircraft maintenance) was also burning. Constant bursts now came up towards me from guns on the edges of the aerodrome, and I carried out my last attack against some of them. I then turned 90° towards the north, joined the mouth of the Thames and re-crossed the English Channel.*

### Positively destroyed:

*One Spitfire shot down in combat, crash observed,*

*Two Hawker Hurricanes shot down in flames near the runway as they were landing,*

*Two Hawker Hurricanes destroyed by fire on the aerodrome,*

*Three Hawker Hurricanes destroyed by fire following the explosion of a tanker; as well as a large tent (of which I could not observe the contents) with three stakes.*

(Signed) v. Werra, (Countersigned) Oblt. Sannemann)

The unit was recalled at the beginning of August and on the 7th it moved to Wierre-au-Bois from where it flew several missions a day across the English Channel, mainly escorting bombers. Almost all missions resulted in the clashes with British fighters that Oblt. von Werra - he was promoted on 1 August - had awaited so impatiently.

At 16.30 hrs on 28 August, the *Gruppe* took off from Wierre-au-Bois to carry out a free hunt in the area of Dover and the mouth of the Thames. The unit met strong opposition in the form of Spitfires, Hurricanes and Defiants and claimed at least eight victories, the most successful pilots being Uffz. Konrad Nelleskamp, Ofw. Josef Heinzeller, Uffz. Kurt Gräf and Oblt. Franz von Werra. For



the latter, however, the mission was far from finished, as shown by the following report which von Werra wrote the following day:

Nearly one month after this event, and almost certainly as a result of a higher authority seeking verification of von Werra's account, *Hptm.* von Selle was asked to comment. However, he could only write: "*Considering the conditions of combat over England, in the majority of the cases there is no witness who can confirm or refute the declarations. Nothing, however, makes it possible to contradict the report.*" No doubt von Selle was referring here to his personal experience when several of his own victories - including a Spitfire shot down two days before von Werra's claims - were not officially confirmed due to lack of witnesses.

## Prisoner and Escaper

On Thursday, 5 September 1940, the aircraft of II./JG 3 took off from Wierre-au-Bois to fly a fighter-escort mission for bombers attacking Croydon. Once the bombers had released their bombs and were heading back to their French bases, the aircraft of II./JG 3 carried out some strafing of ground targets. Unfortunately, however, the pilots encountered a formation of Spitfires and von Werra's aircraft was so seriously damaged that he had to make a forced landing at Love's Farm, Winchet Hill, Marden, where he was captured unhurt. He was first taken to the local police station, but was then handed over to the army. The following morning, guarded by an officer and two soldiers, von Werra was taken by lorry to the PoW interrogation centre at 8 Kensington Palace Gardens, London. For the next two weeks von Werra was interrogated. As he was the first Luftwaffe ace to be captured by the British, he was questioned with great care, but all attempts to obtain significant information were in vain, the interrogation report stating, "*Refused to give any details whatsoever. Morale: very high.*"

On 29 September, von Werra wrote to his sister and in this, his second letter written in captivity, he said, obviously already thinking of escape, "*I think I will be close to you even sooner than this stupid letter. Here, all is well, more or less. No reason to worry. See you very soon.*"

At the beginning of October, von Werra was transferred to the officers' internment camp at Grizedale Hall in the Lake District. After observing the camp routine, he evolved an escape plan which he submitted to the camp's Senior German Officer, *Major* Willibald Fanelsa, formerly of KG 1, and *Hptm.* Helmut Pohle, formerly of KG 30 and head of the camp's escape committee. Von Werra's plan was approved and he received a promise that he would receive the necessary assistance. The first stage of the plan required *Major* Fanelsa to request the daily exercise walk, usually carried out at 10.30 hrs, to be delayed until 14.00 hrs, ostensibly because it interfered with the camp's educational courses. The real reason for the request, however, was that it shortened the time a prisoner escaping during the walk would have to wait until nightfall. The camp commander agreed the request and on 7 October, a group of 24 prisoners under the command of *Hptm.* Pohle, escorted by a British officer, three warrant officers and seven soldiers, left the camp at the later time. During a rest break along the route, von Werra managed to slip over a wall into an adjacent field to begin his escape. Despite many searches of the area during the following days, von Werra remained at large, but at 23.00 hrs on 10 October, two members of the Home Guard were searching a barn in which von Werra was hiding and he was recaptured. By the time von Werra was escorted to the nearest road, however, he had already untied the knot of the cord used to bind his hands and disappeared into the night. Recaptured again during a large, joint search by police and army on 12 October, he was sentenced to 21 days' close confinement.

Released on day 19, he was transferred to a PoW camp at Swanwick, approximately 10 miles north of Derby. Far from being disappointed by his failure, von Werra encouraged his new fellow-prisoners to escape with him and on 17 November work began on a tunnel. After one month, the three metre deep tunnel was 15 metres long. Then, at 20.25 hrs on 20 December, von Werra and four comrades took advantage of an air raid warning and disappeared into the tunnel. Although his companions were soon recaptured, von Werra had benefited from his earlier escape attempts and had made careful preparations which, he hoped, would enable him to fly back across the Channel. Wearing an imitation British flying jacket and appropriate badges, all made within the camp, his story was that he was Captain van Lott, a Dutch pilot - hence his imperfect English - who had crashed after a special mission. Persuading everyone he encountered that it was imperative he return to his base immediately, he succeeded in gaining entry to Hucknall aerodrome. He was already seated in a Hurricane when Squadron Leader Boniface, an RAF officer more suspicious than his colleagues, forced him from the cockpit at gunpoint. Recaptured once again but undaunted, he assured Sqn. Ldr. Boniface that his next escape attempt would be the one that would see him home.

## Home Run

After spending another 14 days in solitary confinement, von Werra was sent to Canada and, as one of 1,100 German PoWs (250 officers and 850 other ranks), von Werra was placed aboard the *Duchess of York* which set sail for Halifax on 2 January 1941. Eleven days later, the prisoners were put aboard a west-bound train and, on the 24th, in accordance with von Werra's instructions, his



companions diverted the attention of the guards while he escaped by jumping from one of the train's windows. He was then close to Smith Falls, Ontario, about 30 miles from the border with the still neutral United States, and his intention was to cross into the USA where he would be free. Eventually, von Werra reached the US-Canadian border at Prescott. Here, the St. Lawrence River which separates the two countries was iced over and with frozen ears and feet, von Werra walked out onto the ice. After struggling to the middle of the river, he found the ice too thin to bear his weight and, reasoning that there must be a channel of water ahead which was not yet frozen, he returned to the shore. At a deserted holiday camp, von Werra found an old boat and, gathering all his strength, he succeeded in pulling it across the ice to the channel. Using a plate as an oar, he manoeuvred the boat to the American bank and freedom.

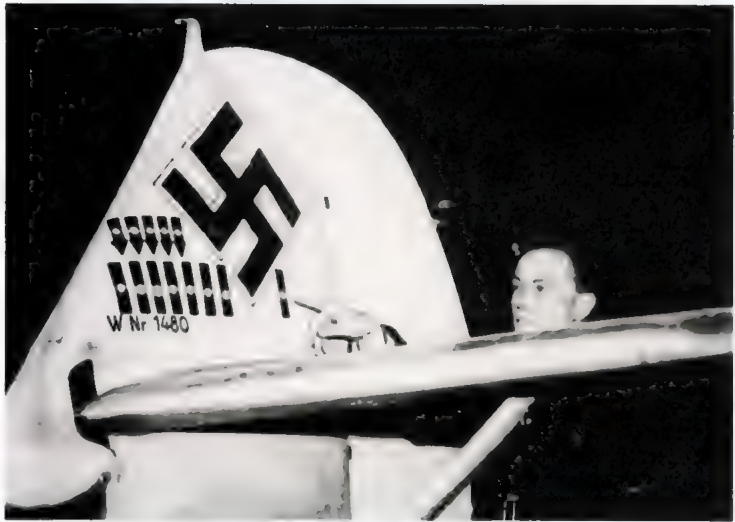
*BELOW:* Oblt. Franz von Werra's Bf 109 E-4 W.Nr. 1480 after its forced landing at Love's Farm, Marden, Kent, on 5 September.



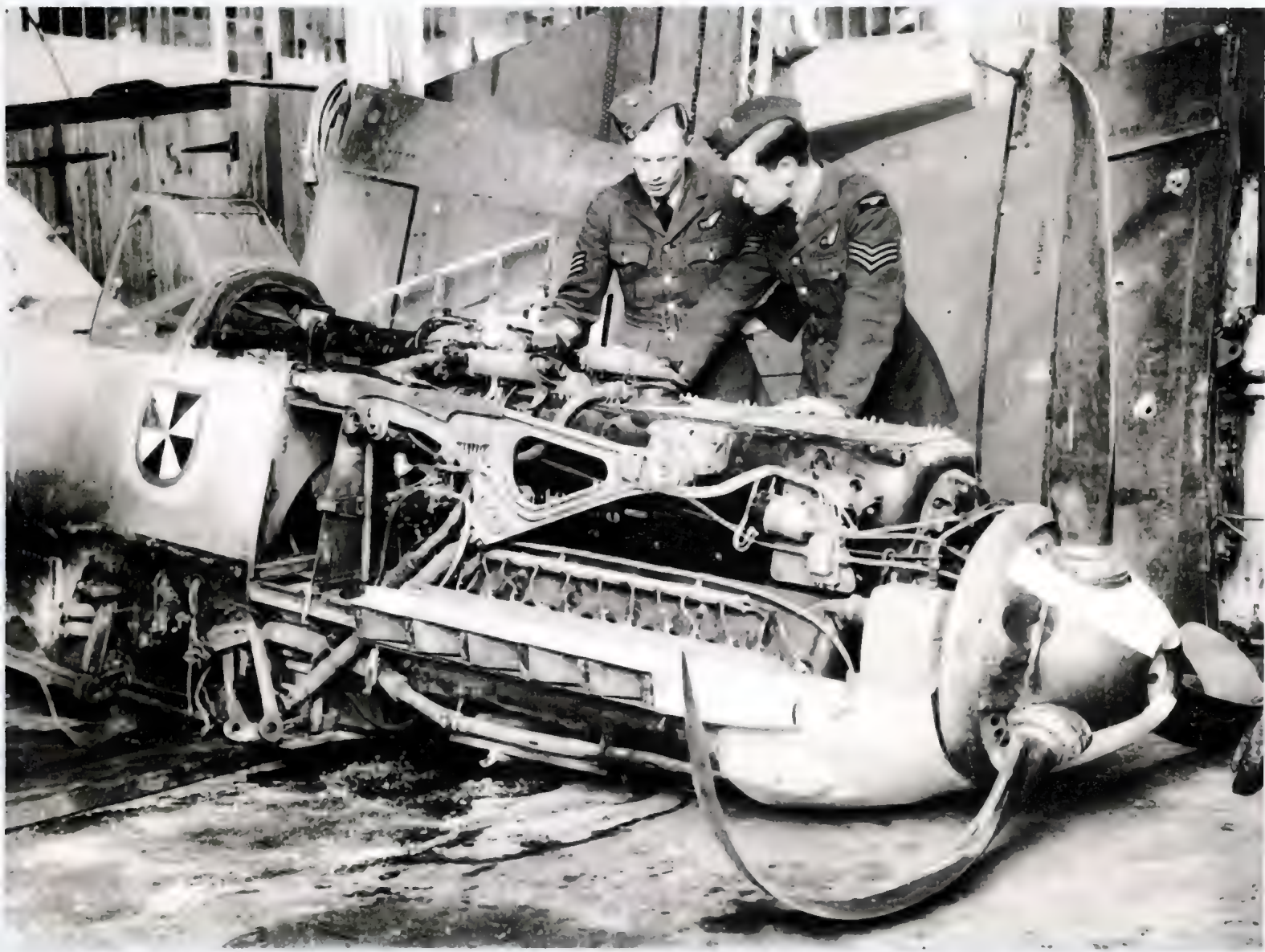
**Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-4 of Gruppenstab II./JG 3 flown by the Gruppenadjutant, Oblt. Franz von Werra**  
The Bf 109 E-4, Werk Nummer 1480, flown by Oblt. Franz von Werra of JG 3 which forced landed at Winchet Hill, Marden, Kent on the morning of 5 September 1940. Finished in a high demarcation 02/71 splinter pattern there was no discernible mottling applied to either the fin or fuselage sides. The lighter finish of the removable cowling panel immediately ahead of the windscreen indicates this was a replacement taken from another aircraft. The tips of the main wings and the whole of the rudder were painted white, the black-green spinner had two white segments, and the black and white shield of II./JG 3 was carried beneath the windscreen on both sides of the aircraft.







Von Werra's Abschuss bars were positioned differently on each side of the fin. The downward-pointing arrows indicate aircraft claimed destroyed on the ground while the standard victory bars represent air-to-air kills. This aircraft was later taken to Farnborough for examination.





In New York, because von Werra had entered the US illegally, the German embassy agreed to pay a bond of \$1000. Although he was in fact the third German prisoner to escape from Canada and take refuge in the United States, the American press seized upon the event as if it was unique and was eager to interview "The Red Baron". In Germany, too, the news of his adventures was greeted with great enthusiasm and on 14 December, von Werra was awarded the *Ritterkreuz* in recognition of his achievement.

For the next six weeks, von Werra enjoyed, as he wrote to his sister, "*a princely life*". He even sent a postcard to Sqn. Ldr. Boniface, with whom he had bet a magnum of champagne against ten cigarettes that his third escape attempt would succeed. To the American authorities, however, von Werra was an unwanted and unwelcome visitor and they planned to extradite him back to Canada, but the German embassy was aware of the danger and made arrangements for von Werra to escape to Mexico City, Peru and finally Brazil. From Brazil, von Werra sailed from Rio de Janeiro for Spain, arriving in Barcelona on 16 April. The following day, after a short stop in Rome, he arrived in Berlin where he was personally received by Hitler and Göring as the first - and last - German soldier to escape from British captivity after July 1940.

Promoted by Göring to *Hauptmann*, von Werra then spent a few days at the RLM where he was extensively debriefed in order to extract the maximum benefit from his experiences, particularly concerning the interrogation techniques employed by the British. Although offered a position working in Berlin, von Werra was anxious to return to flying duties and was soon pressing for a transfer so that he could rejoin a front-line fighter unit.

## Flying Again

On 22 June 1941, Germany invaded the USSR. Many fighter units took part in this action, and I./JG 53, engaged on the central front with *Luftflotte Mitte*, suffered heavy losses. On 24 June, the *Kommandeur*, *Oblt.* Wilfried Balfanz was shot down and reported missing after combat with an SB-3 near Prusznana. He was temporarily replaced by *Hptm.* Ignaz Prestele until the arrival of the new *Kommandeur*, *Hptm.* Franz von Werra. On account of his experiences he was at first received by his pilots with some curiosity but, wishing as soon as possible to exchange his reputation as "King of the Escapers" for that of a good officer, he made it a point of honour to always fly at the front of his unit. On 6 July, von Werra shot down an SB-2, his first victory on the Eastern Front. Two days later he claimed a DB-3 and this was followed by two more victories on the 11th and another on the 12th. Further victories were claimed on the 17 and 18th, two on the 23rd, one on the 26th, another on the 29th and two on the 31st.

In mid-August, I./JG 53 was recalled to Mannheim in Germany where it was to be equipped with the new Bf 109 F-4. Taking advantage of the situation, Franz von Werra took some leave and on 22nd August married Elfi Traut at Beuron in Southern Germany.

A few weeks later, on 20 September, I./JG 53 was transferred to the Netherlands where, with *Stab*, 1. and 3. *Staffeln* based at Katwijk and 2./JG 53 in Haamstede, the *Gruppe* was to help defend the north-western borders of the *Reich*. Although based in the Netherlands for only a short time, it was here that the *Gruppe* lost its *Kommandeur*. *Hptm.* Franz von Werra, then credited with a total of 21 victories, was carrying out a routine flight off Katwijk on 25 October when he lost control of his Bf 109 F-4, W.Nr. 7285, and crashed into the sea. As no warning signs had been observed and no distress call heard, it was assumed that von Werra's aircraft had suffered a sudden and catastrophic engine failure. Later, *Ritterkreuzträger* *Hptm.* Herbert Kaminski arrived to take command of the *Gruppe* which, in December, was transferred to the Mediterranean area and subsequently became heavily involved in the air battles on the Malta front.

A short time before his death, von Werra had made friends with *Oblt.* Wilfried von Müller Rienzburg, who later recalled:-

*"I became acquainted with Hptm. von Werra in Holland. I remember a long and interesting evening during which he told me of his escape in great detail. That evening must have been pleasant for him also, because one week later he invited me to join him again in Katwijk and take part in bare bunting. I took off from Schiphol to fly to Katwijk. While approaching, I was concerned to see signs of a commotion on the airfield. Someone explained that hardly 30 minutes before, the Kommandeur had crashed into the sea within two kilometres of the airfield. As von Werra was obeying a strict order prohibiting him (for obvious reasons of safety following his escape) from flying towards Great Britain, he had not flown more than 10 km from the coast. He had been flying on this occasion with his Stabschwarm and was at 20-30 metres, preparing to land, when for no apparent reason his aircraft suddenly went into a dive towards the sea and disappeared in a few seconds. His comrades orbited the crash site for a long time but could detect nothing. A high-speed motorboat dispatched to search the area also returned empty-handed... a fine tragedy for a hero and a comrade."*

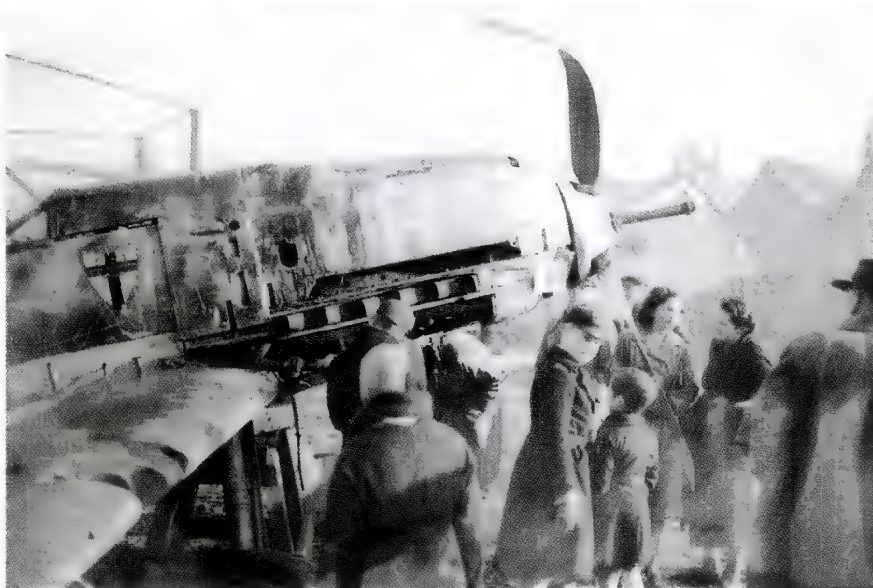
Thus ended the short but eventful career of Franz von Werra. The myths concerning him which began during the war were later perpetuated post-war in many articles and books as well as in the British-made film *The One that Got Away* in which the actor Hardy Krüger played the role of von Werra.



ABOVE:  
Three photographs of von Werra after his escape from Canada; top in New York with bandaged frostbitten ears, (CENTRE) in Mexico and (BOTTOM) at home in Germany with his wife Elfi.



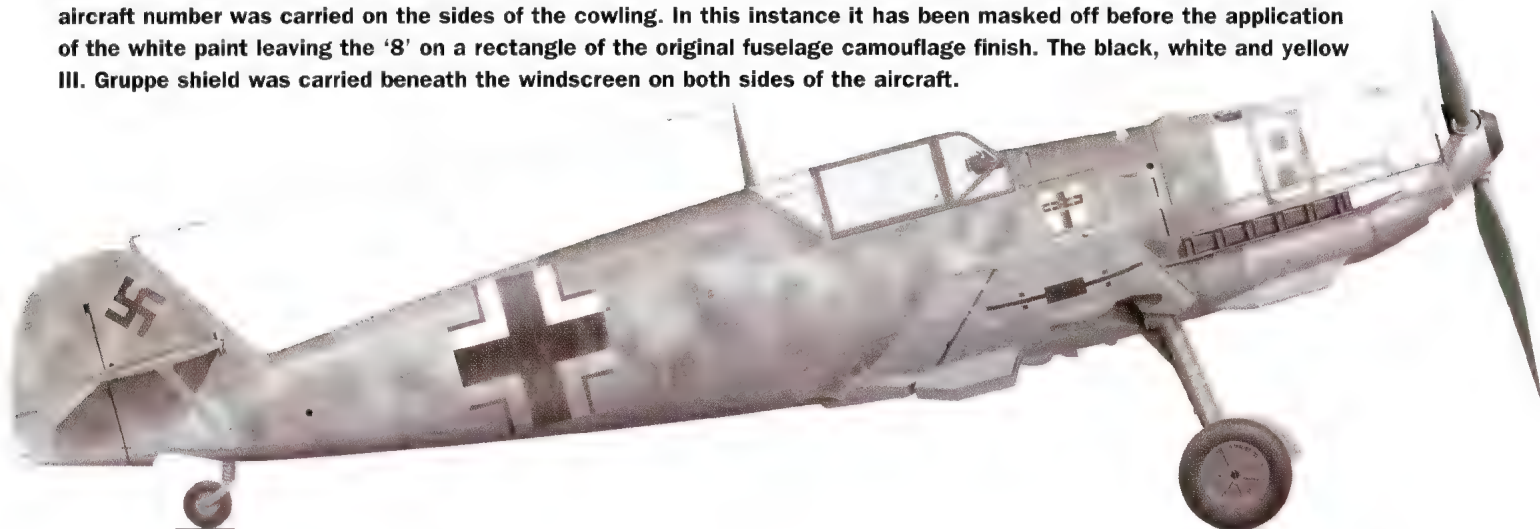
September-October 1940



*ABOVE AND LEFT:* During the late afternoon of 6 September 1940, 'White 8' was flying a patrol over Kent with the whole of 7./JG 27 when it was attacked over Canterbury by P/O J. McKenzie of 41 Sqn. The cooling system was damaged and the pilot, Uffz. Ernst Nittmann, forced landed at Blean. In accordance with JG 27's practice, the aircraft number is painted on both sides of the cowling. This machine was placed on display in the West Country and, in this photograph, thought to have been taken at Wadebridge, Cornwall, it is the attention of some predominantly youthful onlookers.

#### **Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-1 of 7./JG 27 flown by Uffz. Ernst Nittmann**

'White 8', the Bf 109 E-1 which Uffz. Ernst Nittmann forced landed near Canterbury on 6 September, was finished in an 02/71 upper surface scheme with the fuselage fairly dense mottled in a combination of 02/71. The cowling and spinner were painted white except for the spinner tip which remained black-green. Following III. Gruppe practice, the aircraft number was carried on the sides of the cowling. In this instance it has been masked off before the application of the white paint leaving the '8' on a rectangle of the original fuselage camouflage finish. The black, white and yellow III. Gruppe shield was carried beneath the windscreen on both sides of the aircraft.





# Diary of Oblt. Werner Schüller

*Editor's Note: Oblt. Werner Schüller was shot down on 6 September, 1940 while flying with 3./JG 27 and although the following was written while he was a PoW, it is included here for its descriptive and interest value. The diary extract begins with Oblt Schüller returning to JG 27 after recovering from wounds. He finds the Stab of JG 27 billeted in a small chateau surrounded by badly neglected grounds. The aircraft were concealed nearby under trees, two Staffeln of the Gruppe being stationed under tall, ancient oaks surrounding a meadow from which the aircraft had first to be taxied on to the real aerodrome.*

The aircraft, commands and tents were embowered in dense, leafy thickets. The meadow seemed a still, summery paradise. But not for long. Soon the engines will begin to roar; the start was due in a quarter of an hour's time. At the *Gruppen* field command, I had a merry reunion with old friends. However, we had not much time for social amenities. The *Kommandeur* was already discussing the sortie with the two *Staffelkapitäne*. I was hastily given my place in the *Staffel*.

While the engines were warming up the *Staffelkapitän* discussed the forthcoming raid with their pilots, then we got aboard. I hastily scrounged a parachute, an oxygen mask, a life jacket and all the other necessary junk, and scrambled into the aircraft as the *Staffelkapitän* was taxiing to the start point. As we taxied over the field a wonderful picture was spread before my eyes. All about us the countryside was spewing fighters into the heavens. Beside a patch of wood, 109s were rushing up out of a fold in the ground. The fighters' airfields lay cheek by jowl all round and the whole sky was really full of the drone of engines. Opposite, from the same little drome, which has only a single runway, the second *Gruppe* of our *Geschwader* was coming towards us and roaring over our heads. Then we took off with a following wind,



ABOVE: Lacking the standard yellow nose of the September-October period of the Battle, this photograph, probably taken in August shows a view typical of a dispersed Bf 109 E, in this case 'Yellow 6' of 6./JG 27.

into the clouds of reddish-grey dust stirred up by those who had gone before us. Climbing steadily, the *Schwärme*, *Staffeln*, *Gruppen* and *Geschwader* assembled over XXX<sup>1</sup>. I was flying with the *Staffelkapitän* as Number 4. It felt rather queer to be flying at the back again when one has for two years always taken the front place, but that didn't matter. I was much too happy to be taking part in a real, proper war flight once more, just as I had been planning all the way down in the train.

Punctual to the minute the Stuka *Verband* that we were to escort appeared at the rendezvous. The fighter units took up their agreed positions and for fear of overshooting them by their superior speed, remained hovering above, below and behind the Stukas who were now flying in close formation towards the coast. As far as the eye could see there were our own aircraft, like an immense flock of birds. Little, hardly visible dots drifted to and fro and into the feathery clouds, trailing white streamers from their exhausts. The Channel lay empty and deserted below us. Not a ship was in sight, only a few small boats patrolling in the neighbourhood of Cherbourg.

It hardly seemed a moment before we were over the English coast. The chalk cliffs gleamed whitely and immediately we saw the first little black puffs down below us to the right. Flak! Then a tremendous fusillade began down below. Puffs and splinters seemed to be everywhere at once. We buzzed merrily through them. One would have expected that any number of planes would have been shot down considering the quantity that was up aloft, but with strange precision the English gunners planted every shell where it could do no harm...

So far nothing had been seen of enemy fighters but no doubt they would soon come onto the scene. Then, out on the left wing something seemed to be happening. The little dark specks on the horizon were whirling and dodging, for amongst them a dark pennon of smoke sank into the depths. Almost at once we heard the cry, "Spitfires! Spitfires!". From above on the right a squadron of Spitfires was dropping down on us, but one of our higher flying *Staffeln* was on their tail. Suddenly the *Staffelkapitän* dived sharply downwards. Number 3 hesitated a moment before following on and I saw six Hurricanes shooting at us from our right front. I pulled my kite sharply round and pressed every button. I had one of the chaps rights in the middle of the gunsight! A fraction of a second later the whole caboodle was flying over the roof of my cabin. I pulled the machine sharply up and round to get in another shot, but all I could see was our friends diving steeply down out of harm's way. To have followed them alone would have been simply, practically suicidal. Anyway, I'm sure I gave one of them a belly full but unfortunately I could not tell what finally happened to him. The fight lasted only a few seconds and now there was no more to be seen of the enemy. True, I had no idea where the rest of my *Staffel* had got to and, as it is highly inadvisable to wander about these skies alone, I joined the first '109 unit that came along.

Below us to the right lay the beginning of the vast sea of houses that is London, so we must be near our target - a fighter aerodrome. Sure enough, the first Stukas were beginning to dive. I followed their dive with my eyes but as yet could see nothing that looked like an aerodrome. I heard the detonation of the first bombs which fell in a hedge surrounding a large field. At last I could see the tracks of wheels in the field and could distinguished camouflaged fighters all along the edges. One bomb after another fell among them. A considerable number were set on fire. The attack had gone exactly according to plan. It was a pity we couldn't bring our MGs and cannon into action too, but our orders were to keep with the Stukas, now setting their course for home. We felt that the 'Tommies' might have had the decency to give us another shot at them, but not one was to be seen. All that happened on the way home was an occasional burst of flak to the rear. As we crossed the coast I saw a plane leaving a white trail and sinking lower and lower - shot through the radiator. I hoped sincerely that he might make the other side because - efficient though our *Seenotdienst* is - one would hardly feel like taking a bath in the Channel at this time of the evening, and also the Channel has become the grave of many a German airman.

Meanwhile, we had re-crossed the French coast and I said farewell to my elective *Verband* which was bound for another aerodrome. When I got back, the *Gruppe* was in the process of landing, so I joined my *Staffel* and arrived with everyone else and nobody noticed that I had spent quite a time cruising about on my own. Pity that it was all for nothing, I should have liked to have brought back a victory on my first flight.

1. The location was not revealed in the original document



## Luftwaffe units equipped with the Bf 109 – 7 September 1940

As prepared by 6./Abteilung OKL (Quartermaster General Department)

### Luftflotte 2 (Brussels)

				Aircraft Strength	Aircraft Operational
<b>II.Fliegerkorps</b>	Erprobungsgruppe 210	Bf 109 E, Bf 110	Denain	26	(17)
	II.(S)Gr./LG 2	Bf 109 E	St Omer	33	(27)
<b>Jagdfliegerführer 2</b>	Stab/JG 3	Bf 109 E	Pas de Calais	3	(3)
	I./JG 3	Bf 109 E	Colombert	23	(14)
	II./JG 3	Bf 109 E	Pas de Calais	24	(21)
	III./JG 3	Bf 109 E	Desvres	25	(23)
	Stab/JG 26	Bf 109 E	Audembert	4	(3)
	I./JG 26	Bf 109 E	Audembert	27	(20)
	II./JG 26	Bf 109 E	Marquise	32	(28)
	III./JG 26	Bf 109 E	Caffiers	29	(26)
	Stab/JG 27	Bf 109 E	Etaples	5	(4)
	I./JG 27	Bf 109 E	Etaples	33	(27)
	II./JG 27	Bf 109 E	Montreuil	37	(33)
	III./JG 27	Bf 109 E	Sempy	31	(27)
	Stab/JG 51	Bf 109 E	St Omer	5	(4)
	I./JG 51	Bf 109 E	St Omer & St Ingelvert	36	(33)
	II./JG 51	Bf 109 E	St Omer & St Ingelvert	22	(13)
	III./JG 51	Bf 109 E	Pas de Calais	44	(31)
	Stab/JG 52	Bf 109 E	Laon/Couvron	2	(1)
	I./JG 52	Bf 109 E	Laon/Couvron	21	(17)
	II./JG 52	Bf 109 E	Pas de Calais	28	(23)
	III./JG 52	Bf 109 E	Pas de Calais	31	(16) <sup>1</sup>
	Stab/JG 53	Bf 109 E	Northern France	2	(2)
	II./JG 53	Bf 109 E	Wissant	33	(24)
	III./JG 53	Bf 109 E	Northern France	30	(22)
	I./JG 77	Bf 109 E	Northern France	42	(40)
<b>Luftgaukommando IV</b>	Stab/JG 1	Bf 109 E	Pas de Calais	3	(3)
<b>Luftgaukommando Holland</b>	Stab/JG 54	Bf 109 E	South Holland	4	(2)
	I./JG 54	Bf 109 E	South Holland	28	(23)
	II./JG 54	Bf 109 E	South Holland	35	(27)
	III./JG 54	Bf 109 E	South Holland	29	(23)

### Luftflotte 3 (St Cloud)

<b>V.Fliegerkorps</b>	Stab/JG 2	Bf 109 E *	Beaumont-le-Roger	3	(2)
	I./JG 2	Bf 109 E *	Beaumont-le-Roger	29	(24)
	II./JG 2	Bf 109 E *	Beaumont-le-Roger	22	(18)
	III./JG 2	Bf 109 E *	Le Havre	34	(27)
	I./JG 53	Bf 109 E	Brittany	34	(27)

\* JG 2 was interchangeable between Luftflotte 2 and 3

### Luftflotte 5 (Oslo)

<b>Luftgaukommando Norwegen</b>	II./JG 77	Bf 109 E	Southern Norway	44	(35)
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1. At this time III./JG 52 had returned to Germany



**RIGHT:** No doubt due to the influence of Werner Mölders, Gruppenkommandeur of III. Gruppe from 26 September 1939 to 20 July 1940, JG 53 developed a number of special formations and tactics during the Battle. Similarly, the unit had its own distinctive 02/70/71 camouflage scheme, first developed in early 1940 and retained in a number of variations throughout the year. In this photograph, 'White 2' of 7./JG 53 shows a variation of this finish, and is complete with yellow nose and red cowling ring. The use of RLM 02 in combination with the original 70/71 proved a very effective camouflage scheme, merging well with most backgrounds when the aircraft was parked on the ground or flying at low level.



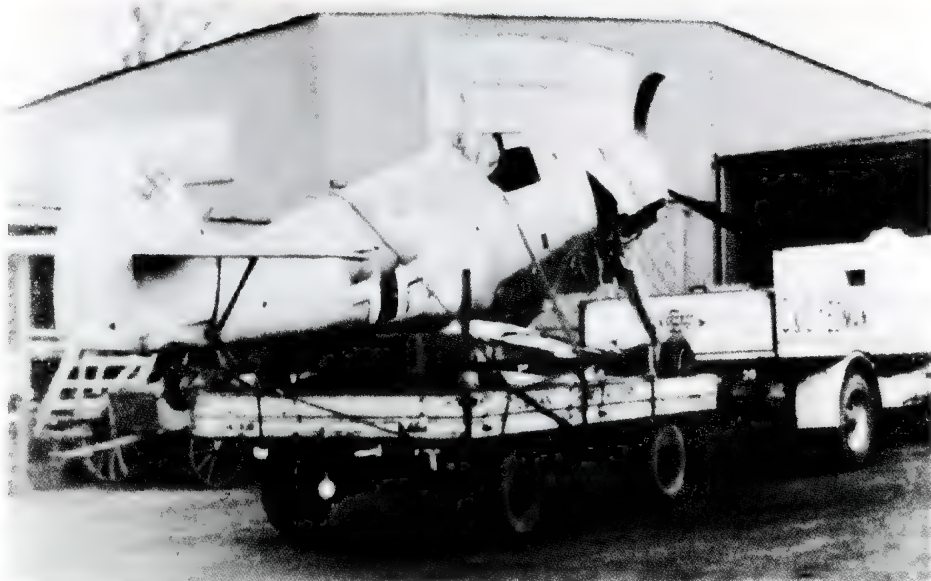
## Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-1 of III./JG 53

Carrying the now familiar red ring around the cowling, this Bf 109 E-1 of III./JG 53, 'White 11', had an irregular coat of 02 applied over the original 70/71 uppersurface scheme to create a 'reverse mottle' effect. The white segments of the Balkenkreuz were significantly reduced but no effort had been made to lessen the visibility of the aircraft number or vertical Gruppe bar which were applied in white but without the customary black border. Although no definitive information on the position of the Hakenkreuz is presently available, for the purposes of this profile it has been provisionally placed in the normal fin location.



Three views of 'White 11' from 7./JG 53 showing one of the many camouflage schemes applied to Bf 109 Es during the summer and autumn of 1940. In this instance, RLM 02 has been applied over the original 70/71 mid-level demarcation finish to produce a 'reverse mottle' effect on the fuselage sides and wing uppersurfaces. At the time of publication, the identity of the Leutnant is not known.





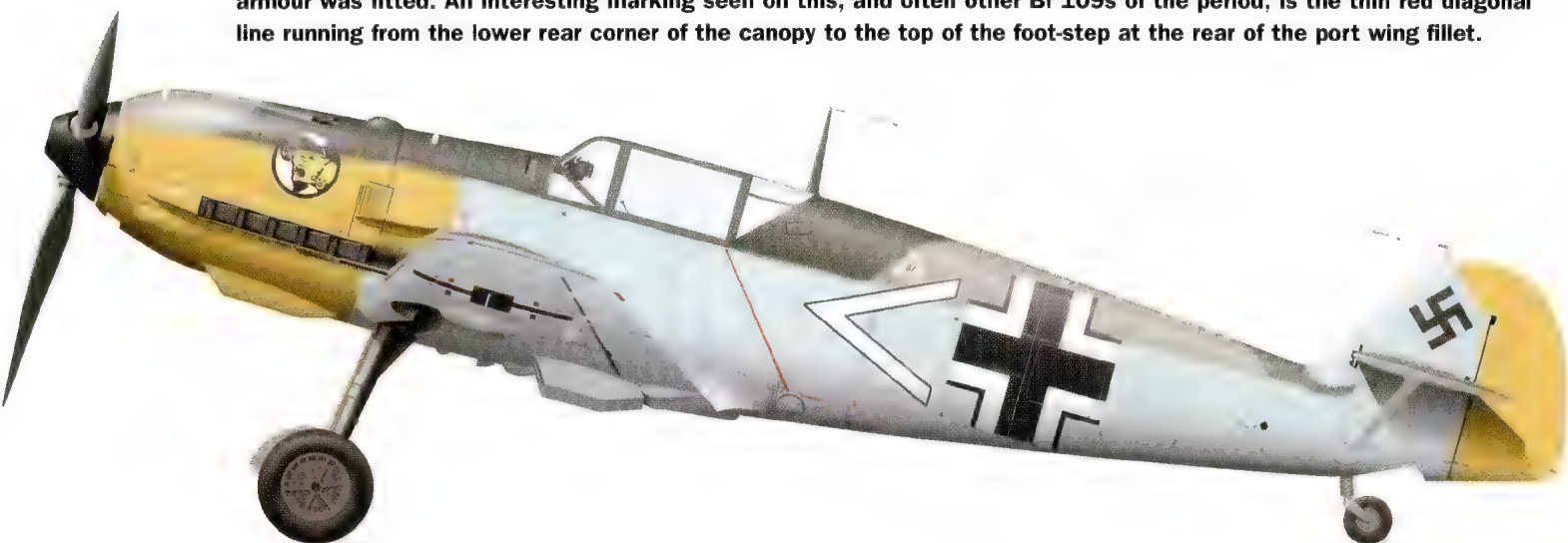
Flying near London at 16,000 ft on 9 September, Oblt. Günther Bode's aircraft was attacked by Spitfires which damaged the radiator with their first burst. Oblt. Bode turned for home but the engine began to overheat and he made a forced landing.



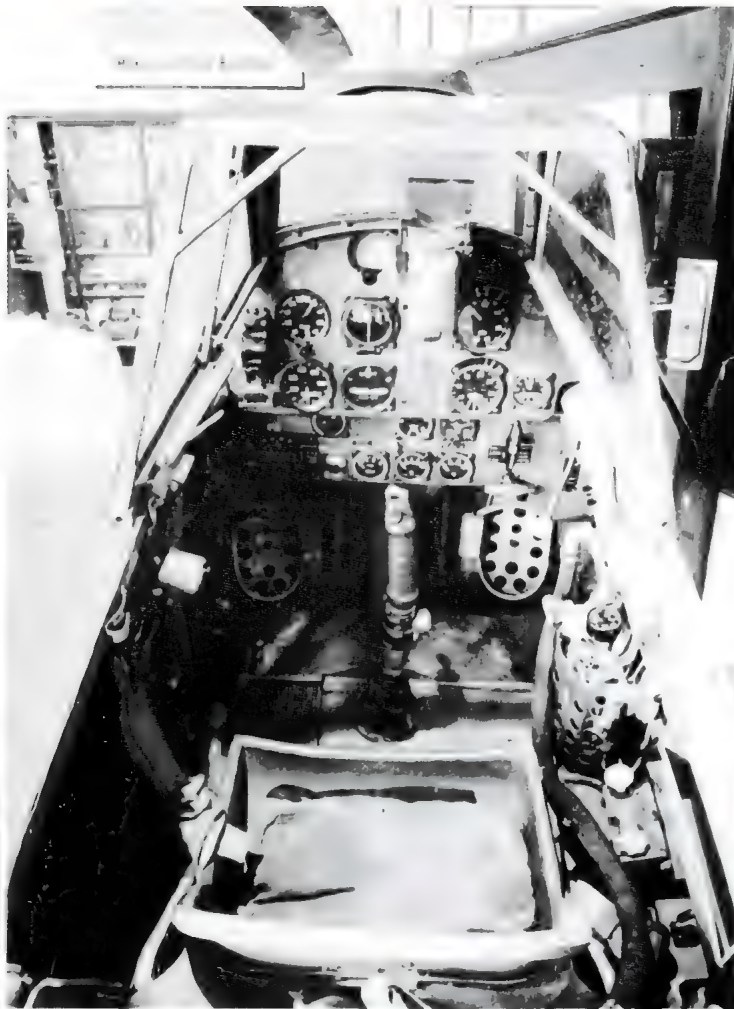
ABOVE: Bode's Bf 109 E arriving in Salisbury and (ABOVE RIGHT AND RIGHT) on exhibition.



**Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-4 of Gruppenstab I./JG 27, flown by Oblt. Günther Bode, Gruppenadjutant**  
Forced to land near Mayfield during the early evening of 9 September, 'White Chevron', was the Bf 109 E-4 flown by Oblt. Günther Bode of I./JG 27. This aircraft had only been recently delivered to the unit, hence its clean appearance, and was finished in a high demarcation 02/71 upper scheme with no fuselage mottling. The rudder and cowlings were yellow, but the spinner was left in green 70 and the yellow paint did not cover the camouflage on the top of the cowlings. The aircraft carried the emblem of I./JG 27 on the nose and although fitted with the later style of canopy, no head armour was fitted. An interesting marking seen on this, and often other Bf 109s of the period, is the thin red diagonal line running from the lower rear corner of the canopy to the top of the foot-step at the rear of the port wing fillet.

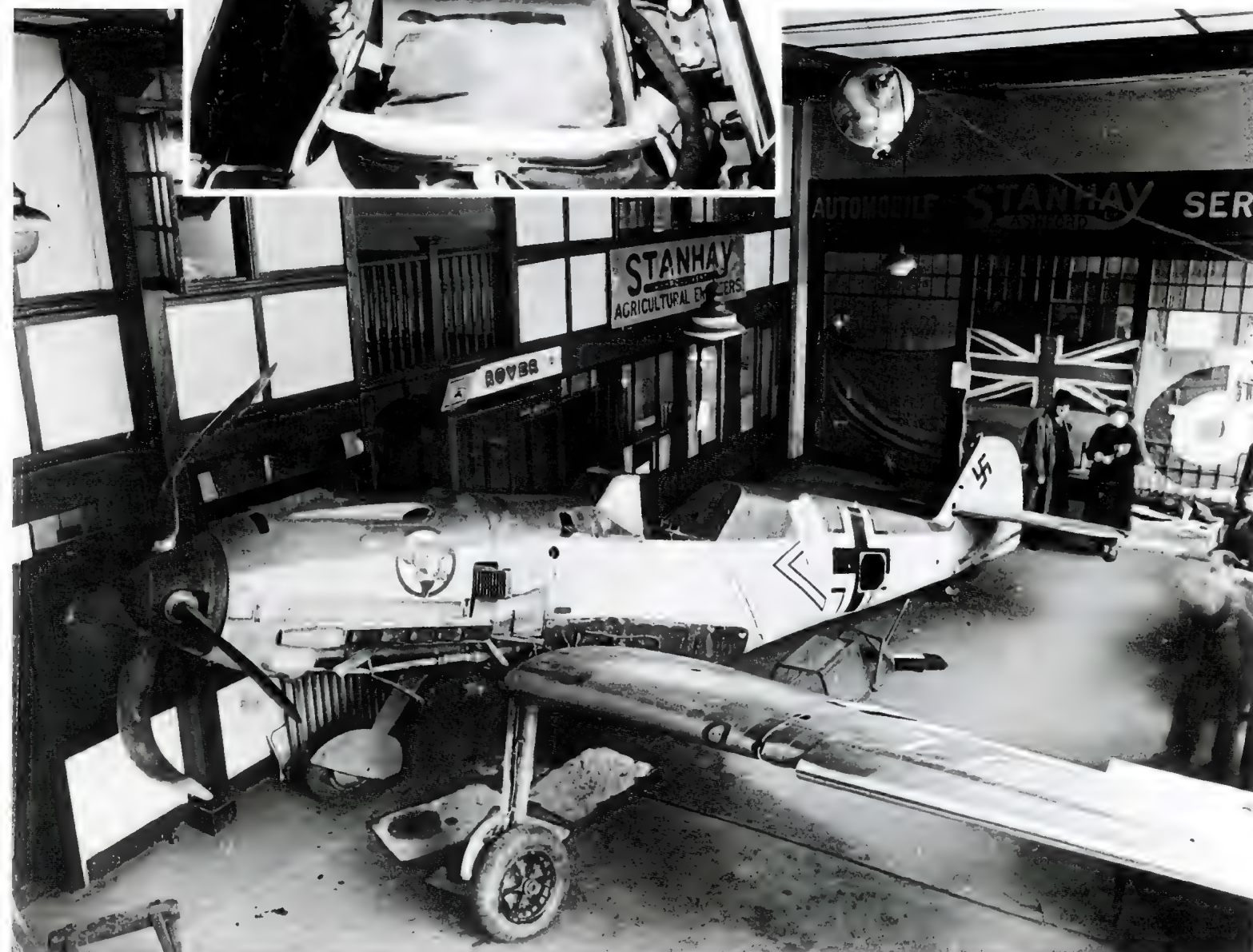






*LEFT:* A clear close-up of the cockpit of Oblt. Bode's aircraft. Note the patterned cushion placed in the seat pan for the comfort of visitors who, for a small fee, were able to sit in the aircraft. The hole in the instrument panel to the left of the gun-sight is the normal position for the aircraft's clock. This item made a popular souvenir and was invariably the first component to be looted from downed aircraft.

Bode's Bf 109 E was also displayed in Stanhay's garage, in Ashford, Kent, where these photographs were taken.



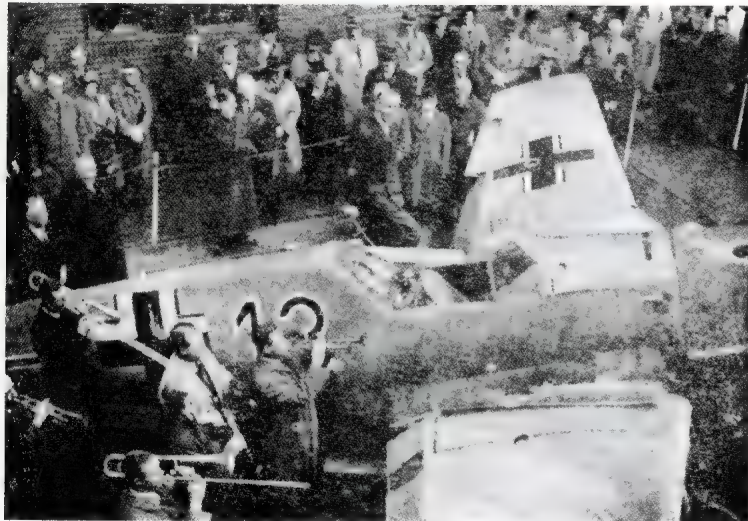




'Black 9' (*LEFT*) was flown pre-war by Erwin Daig. Later, as an Oberleutnant, Daig became Staffelführer of 5./JG 27 and flew the Bf 109 E-1 W.Nr. 3488. 'Black 13', seen here (*BELOW*) dispersed and partially camouflaged on the airfield at Fimber. This aircraft was modified to carry an ETC 50 bomb rack which could accommodate four 50 kg SC 50 bombs beneath the fuselage. On 9 September, Daig – not carrying the bomb rack on this occasion – took off on a fighter escort mission to accompany bombers to London. At 20,000 feet, his aircraft was attacked by fighters which damaged his fuel and engine cooling systems and Daig made a forced landing at Charity Farm near Parham, Sussex, where he was subsequently taken prisoner. His aircraft was later displayed in Birmingham (*BOTTOM AND OPPOSITE BOTTOM*), and is seen here (*OPPOSITE*) in Dudley where the Henry Hall band is entertaining war-workers. For a while during the 1930s Henry Hall directed the BBC dance orchestra and was the most popular radio star in Britain.







**Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-1 of 5./JG 27 flown by Oblt. Erwin Daig**

'Black 13' was the Bf 109 E-1 of 5./JG 27 flown by Oblt. Erwin Daig during the early evening of 9 September and which forced landed near Storrington. Finished in a high demarcation 70/71 upper scheme, the fuselage sides carried a fairly dense but evenly applied overspray of 02. The cowling and rudder were yellow and although some reports suggest that half of the spinner was painted white, no photographic evidence of this has yet been seen. In keeping with 5. Staffel practice, the '13' was painted black but the Gruppe bar was red, both being thinly outlined in white. The aircraft was fitted with an earlier style of canopy retro-fitted with head armour and while no ETC rack was carried on the day it was shot down, it had been equipped to operate as a Jabo.





## London – 15 September

**W**ith the promise of fine weather on 15 September, the *Luftwaffe* planned to deliver another heavy blow against London, a repeat of 7 September, which would finally demonstrate the desperate state of Fighter Command and perhaps have a decisive effect on British morale. Abandoning its earlier strategy of feints and diversions, the *Luftwaffe* launched two major attacks which struck straight for their targets in London. The first attack was detected at 11.00 hrs when enemy aircraft began to assemble in the Calais/Boulogne area. Thirty minutes later the leading wave, consisting of 25 Do 17s from KG 76 and 21 Bf 109 *Jabos* from II.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2, escorted by 150 fighters, crossed the Kent coast. Almost immediately the formation was attacked by the first of 16 RAF fighter squadrons. Battling against strong headwinds which dispersed much of the escort, the German formation came under constant attack and although the escorts put up a determined defence, the bombers were soon forced to jettison their loads over southern London and make good their escape. It was during this attack that *Oblt.* Robert Zehbe's Do 17 of 1./KG 76 was brought down, arguably the Battle's most publicised victim. Attacked by various fighters and set alight over central London, the Dornier was finally rammed by a 504 Sqn. Hurricane flown by Sgt. Ray Holmes who had run out of ammunition and intended to clip its tail. However, the Hurricane lost one wing in the collision and went out of control, forcing Holmes to bale out. Meanwhile, the Do 17 broke up and the main wreckage crashed with spectacular force into the forecourt of London's Victoria Station.



Attacked by fighters, set on fire and eventually rammed by a Hurricane, *Oblt.* Robert Zehbke's Do 17 of 1./KG 76 broke up in the air over London and pieces were distributed over a large area. This part of the tail unit landed near Victoria Station.

***"The first thing I saw were railway lines which were running into Victoria Station and I though I was going to be electrocuted. I swung across the road and hit the roof of houses down below, slithering down the roof and landing in a dustbin with my parachute draped over a drainpipe. I jumped out of the dustbin and saw two girls in the garden next door. I was feeling very relieved to be on the ground safely, so I jumped over the fence and kissed them both!"***

*Sgt. Ray Holmes, 504 Sqn., after ramming *Oblt.* Zehbe's Do 17, 15 September 1940.*



Perhaps as a warning of the losses the *Luftwaffe* would suffer on the 15 September, storm clouds gather over Mardijk airfield. The weather was an important factor during the Battle, frequently restricting *Luftwaffe* operations at a critical moment when the battle had swung in the Germans' favour.



The second major attack, first seen on radar just after 13.00 hrs, crossed the coast shortly after 14.00 hrs and involved some 150 aircraft in three waves targeting London docks. These attackers also met determined opposition and although the first two waves were largely dispersed in a running battle all the way to London, about 70 aircraft of the third wave managed to penetrate to the target where they were met by even more fighters. Under ferocious opposition, this formation broke up and, unlike the concentration achieved on 7 September, scattered bombs widely over London's eastern suburbs. According to *Luftwaffe* reports, heavy and sometimes extremely accurate AA fire was encountered but the British fighters flew through this apparently without any regard for their own safety in order to engage the bombers. As the dispersed bomber formations returned in small groups without any fighter cover, other British fighters seized the opportunity and continued to attack the bombers out to mid-Channel and even to the French coast, these attacks being seen as a significant factor in the day's heavy losses.

Apart from a minor attack on Portland by a small force of He 111s from III./KG 55, the situation then remained quiet until the early evening when *Erprobungsgruppe* 210 carried out the last significant raid of the day. Arriving over Southampton at about 17.55 hrs, the ten Bf 110s and three Bf 109s intended to attack the Supermarine works but were distracted by anti-aircraft fire and missed the intended target. Instead, they damaged the Thornycroft shipbuilding works before retiring without loss.

For the British, the day was a significant victory and was certainly the climax of the battle. Although the RAF had lost 27 aircraft and 12 pilots, it had destroyed 61 *Luftwaffe* aircraft while another 23 returned damaged. A total of 20 Bf 109s had been lost in combat with a further three being written off due to combat damage. Of the German fighter pilots, ten had been taken prisoner and eight killed. Losses included two *Staffel* commanders; *Oblt.* Helmut Reumschüssel, *Staffelkapitän* of 3./JG 3, and the *Staffelkapitän* of 3./JG 53, *Oblt.* Julius Haase, who died when his parachute failed to open.

***'The 15th was the climax, the deciding point of the whole battle. It was my birthday and I remember it very well. For the first time we discussed, "Why don't we stop this nonsense? This cannot end in a good way."***

*Recollection of Johannes Steinhoff, then Staffelkapitän of 4./JG 52.*

Much has been written about German reaction to the appearance of so many British fighters on 15 September and the effect on German morale of the RAF's determined defence. Certainly many German aircrew had been repeatedly assured that the RAF was down to its last 50 fighters, and the realisation that, instead of delivering the final knock-out blow, more German aircraft had been destroyed than on any day since 18 August was indeed an unpleasant surprise. Yet the fact remains that the losses each unit suffered on the 15th seems to have had less effect on German morale than many accounts have stated. Previously, after the battles of August and early September, many aircrew had begun to show signs of nervous exhaustion; the tension of waiting for the big attack - *Seelöwe* - to begin, the amount of operational flying and the bitter days of *Kanalkampf*, all had an effect on pilots' nerves. But contrary to some accounts, there was no sign of a collapse in German morale as a result of the defeat suffered on 15 September. Instead, the growing realisation that the war against England was not going to be such an easy matter as the victories in Poland, Holland, Belgium and France resulted in aircrew adopting a more fatalistic attitude. Morale at unit level therefore remained remarkably high and confidence in the *Führer* and ultimate victory was unimpaired.



*Oblt. Johannes Steinhoff (ABOVE) led 4./JG 52 from February 1940 until February 1942. In the photograph (BELOW), taken in early 1941, Oblt. Steinhoff is seen with Fw. Schumann, his weapons mechanic. He later became Kommodore of JG 77 in North Africa and, at the end of the war flew with JV 44. He was greatly revered by all who knew him and, post-war, became commander of the Bundesluftwaffe, (the West German Air Force) and chairman of NATO's Military Committee.*





*RIGHT:* Through the Revi: an unusual view of a formation of Bf 109s, photographed through the gunsight of one of the aircraft.



*ABOVE AND MIDDLE RIGHT:* The tail of Oblt. Karl-Heinz Leesmann's W.Nr. 5065 in early September (*ABOVE*) showing five victory bars. Two of these bars represent the Hurricanes he destroyed south-east of Ashford on 1 September. On 15 September Leesmann, the Staffelkapitän of 2./JG 52, claimed another two Hurricanes, bringing his total to eleven. Note the yellow painted segment of the rudder.



*RIGHT:* The Kommodore of JG 2, Major Wolfgang Schellmann (with back to camera) being presented to pilots of 8./JG 2 by the Gruppenkommandeur of III./JG 2, Major Dr. Erich Mix (far right) including Oblt. Bruno Stolle, Staffelkapitän of 8./JG 2 (first left). Third from left in this photograph, taken in mid September, is Uffz. Karl Ebert who had been rescued from the Channel by the Seenotdienst only a short time earlier and is still in civilian clothes.



## Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-7 W.Nr. 2058 from 3.(J)/LG 2 flown by Uffz. August Klick

'Brown 2' forced landed at Sheerness on the afternoon of 15 September when the engine seized following combat with British fighters. The upper surfaces were finished in what were described as a 'cloudy grey' fuselage with 'battleship grey' wings suggesting a combination of 02 and one or more of the unit mixed greys known to have been used during this period. The spinner, cowlings and rudder were painted yellow and the brown aircraft number carried a white outline. The 3.(J)/LG 2 'mouse and umbrella' emblem was yellow with black details and applied to both sides of the rear fuselage. Note that although the I. Gruppe of LG 2 was originally a Jagd, or fighter, Gruppe, by mid-September it was operating a number of aircraft in the Jabo role.



ABOVE: The remains of Uffz. Klick's Bf 109 E-7 in an aircraft scrap yard at Faygate near Horsham, Sussex. Note in the background the wrecks of other Luftwaffe aircraft downed during the Battle of Britain.



3.(J)/LG 2  
'mouse and umbrella'  
emblem



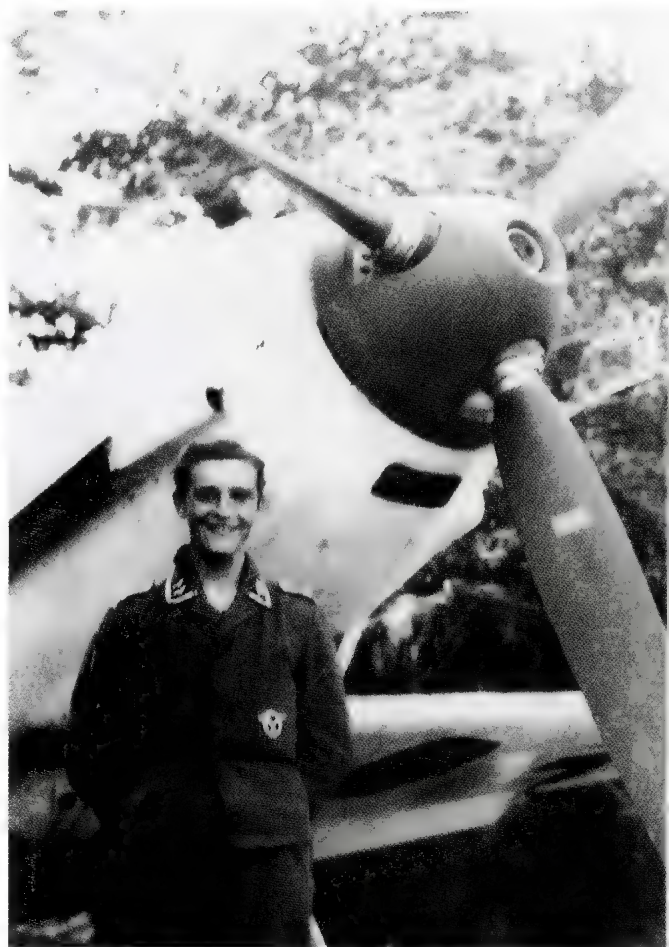
RIGHT: The emblem of 3.(J)/LG 2 on the rear fuselage of Unteroffizier August Klick's Bf 109 'Brown 2', apparently in the process of being removed as a souvenir.



## September-October 1940



**ABOVE:** Fw. Siegfried Schnell of 4./JG 2, one of the most successful pilots of the 'Richthofen' Geschwader, pointing out his eleventh victory bar at Mardijk, near Calais, September 1940. On 1 November, due to his successes and courage, Schnell became an officer (Leutnant) and, on 9 November, with 20 victories, was awarded the Ritterkreuz. In 1941, with 40 victories, he was awarded the Oak Leaves.



**RIGHT:** One pilot to achieve a victory on 15 September was Fhr. Hans-Joachim Marseille of 3.(J)/LG 2 who claimed his fourth on that date, a Hurricane. Although he claimed seven victories during the Battle of Britain - in the process of which he was himself shot down four times - this young pilot would later achieve fame for his successes with I./JG 27 in North Africa. Although barely visible in this photograph, his aircraft has been fitted with an ETC bomb rack.



**RIGHT:** Uffz. Andreas Walburger of 2./JG 27 escorted Do 17s to London on 15 September and was on the return journey when he was attacked by Spitfires, believed to have been from 19 Sqn. As a result of radiator and engine damage, Uffz. Walburger made a forced landing near Uckfield where he was captured unhurt. The nose of this aircraft was yellow with a red and white spinner, and the number '5' on the fuselage was black, edged with red. This photograph shows the remains of Walburger's 'Black 5' in Trafalgar Square, London.



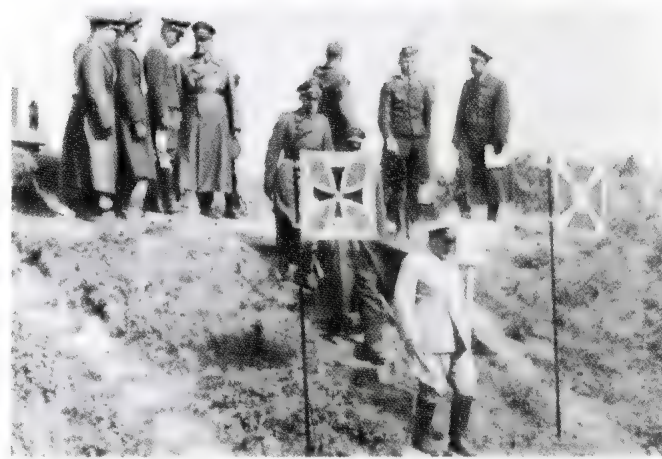
## 16-29 September Change of Plans

**C**ompared with the heavy fighting and losses of the 15th, 16 September was a day of greatly reduced activity and one in which the *Jagdwaaffe* suffered no casualties. A large raid which developed early in the morning was turned back before reaching London and, for the rest of the day, *Luftwaaffe* offensive activity was restricted to sporadic raids which reached the eastern suburbs of London but caused little damage or casualties. This reduction in activity now allowed both sides to reflect on the events of the previous day and in England, Air Vice Marshal Keith Park was able to give some thought to revising his defensive tactics.

Similarly, at a conference aboard his train at Beauvais, Göring met with his *Luftflotten* and *Fliegerkorps* commanders to review the results of operations on 15 September. Göring was by no means convinced that the Battle of Britain was lost, but he had to acknowledge that daylight attacks in their existing form, even with fighter escort, were proving too costly. Under pressure from Hitler, who placed the blame for the failure of the daylight bombing offensive and the way the attacks had been implemented on Göring, he in turn lost no time in telling the *Jagdfliieger* that he held them accountable because they, the fighter pilots, had failed in their clear duty to protect the bombers. Göring also began to accuse the pilots of deliberately exaggerating their victory claims. How else was the continued strength of Fighter Command to be explained<sup>2</sup> when, according to German calculations, the RAF had less than 200 fighters available for the defence of the whole of Britain<sup>3</sup>.

It was at this time, too, that bitter arguments and recrimination broke out between the fighter and bomber personnel. Feeling that their own fighter pilots had let them down, the bomber crews complained to Göring who in turn declared that the fighter arm had failed in its task of escorting bombers. This accusation was a bitter blow to the young commanders of the fighter units who had accepted severe losses without complaint and were convinced that they had fulfilled their tasks to the best of their ability during the air battles of the preceding weeks. Now, instead of being allowed to stay out of sight and, using the speed and manoeuvrability of their Bf 109s, attack the enemy's intercepting fighters as they closed on the bombers, Göring ordered that they should stay even closer to the bombers. The rendezvous between bombers and fighters was also the cause of dissension. The bomber forces argued that much of the time spent assembling over France was wasted because their fighter escort failed to rendezvous at the correct time, while the fighter units claimed that the bomber units took too long to form up over the airfields, thus wasting time and, most importantly, precious fuel which shortened the fighters' useful time over England.

New tactics were therefore proposed for day and night operations. During the day, *Luftflotte* 3 would carry out attacks on Southampton, while *Luftflotte* 2 would restrict its attacks to single *Gruppen* of Ju 88s attacking selected targets in the London area three times a day, each accompanied by maximum fighter escort. Massed formations by Do 17s and He 111s were only to be used during perfect weather conditions. By these means, Göring predicted, if the British fighters continued to attack the Ju 88 *Gruppen* in the large



Flanked by the ceremonial standards of the Reichsmarschall of the Greater German Reich, left, and the command flag of the Reichsminister for Air Transport and Commander in Chief of the *Luftwaaffe*, right, Hermann Göring arrives at Beauvais, close to the Channel coast.

Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring in conversation with Galland (left) and Mölders. Although apparently congenial here, in September 1940 Göring first began to openly criticise the *Jagdfliieger*, blaming them for the mounting bomber losses over England. In the background is Göring's special train, code-named 'Asia'.



2. In September, the number of RAF fighter aircraft available daily for operations averaged 729.

3. Both sides greatly overclaimed during the Battle, though this is not to say it was deliberate. In the period 26 August to 7 September, *Luftwaaffe* claims were from three to four times greater than the RAF's true losses.



numbers recently seen in the defence of London, ordinary battle attrition would soon result in the destruction of Fighter Command's few remaining aircraft.

At night, the bombers of both *Luftflotte* 2 and 3 would on every possible occasion continue the night assault begun on 7 September. However, it was acknowledged that, with only Ju 88 attacks taking place against London during the day, these alone would not be sufficient to ensure a victory as the hours of daylight would allow the enemy time in which to recover. Something had to be done to augment the Ju 88 raids and it was at this point that more and more serious consideration was given to increasing the use of the Bf 109 as a *Jagdbomber*, or *Jabo*, for the daylight bombing of England. At that time, the Bf 109 was the only aircraft which had the speed and range for operations over England by day and which could hold its own against British fighter aircraft. If this aircraft was employed as a fighter-bomber, one major advantage would be that the enemy would no longer be able to tell from his radar picture whether or not the approaching enemy aircraft were carrying bombs. This, it was reasoned, would not only considerably confuse the British defence system, but would again force the British to send up their fighters which would then be engaged by the German fighter escort. In view of the urgency of the situation, the decision to convert part of the fighter force to *Jabos* was only logical and the experience already gained by *Erp.Gr.* 210 and II.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 proved an invaluable asset when the first major *Jabo* attack was carried out a few days later.

Clearer weather on the 18th allowed units from Kesselring's *Luftflotte* 2 to operate again in some strength over south-eastern England with several major incursions developing. In the first attack, II.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 committed 21 Bf 109s in a bombing operation against Tilbury docks where 13 SC 250s, one oil bomb and 28 SC 50 bombs were dropped, hitting the rail triangle and houses west of the docks. A few hours later, II.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 escorted by more than 100 fighters conducted a new attack against the Port Victoria oil depot where oil tanks were set on fire, and a small formation of bombers, again escorted by more than 100 fighters, targeted the naval installations in the Chatham-Rochester area. However, as if aware of Kesselring's intention to draw his fighters into what could develop into an unprofitable fighter versus fighter battle, Park refused to respond. The third attack was preceded by a fighter sweep carried out by a large number of fighters which flew up the Thames but turned back before they could be intercepted. Clearly the intention was to lure the RAF into the air, disengage, and then send in the bombers while the RAF was refuelling, for soon afterwards, another 40 fighters swept in over the Canterbury area on a *freie Jagd* followed by the Ju 88s of III./KG 77 bound for the Tilbury and Medway areas. Positively identified as hostile bombers even while still on their approach, the Ju 88s received the attention of several RAF squadrons which accounted for eight of the bombers.

Between 19–23 September, rain and unsettled weather once again restricted *Luftwaffe* daylight activity over southern England. Any operations mounted were predominantly fighter sweeps or isolated raids by solitary aircraft, but a notable exception occurred on the 20th when the first major *Jabo* attack was carried out. Despite his reservations that it was too bold a risk to send bomb-carrying fighters into the centre of the enemy's defences, Kesselring was persuaded to send 22 Bf 109s from II.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 - heavily escorted by fighters - to attack London. In the event, despite the fact that RAF crash investigators had already obtained irrefutable evidence that some Bf 109s had been fitted with bomb-racks<sup>4</sup> the attack came as a complete surprise. All 22 of the *Jabos* each released an SC250 bomb, these landing on the city and its railway system. JG 51's Werner Mölders was able to add to his score of victories, shooting down two 92 Sqn. Spitfires within moments of each other near Dungeness, and all *Jabos* returned safely, the only loss being a Bf 109 from 9./JG 27. Intercepted radio messages revealed that at first the British were unable to believe that bombs had fallen without any enemy bombers being seen, and overlapping radio reports showed that the state of confusion which reigned in London had reached monumental proportions. The raid was pronounced an unqualified success and Göring immediately ordered that all eight of the *Jagdgeschwadern* operating against England were to convert fully one third of their aircraft to fighter-bombers.

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4. On 6 September Fw. Werner Gottschalk from 6.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 had crash-landed his Bf 109 E-4/B on Hawkinge airfield, thus providing the RAF with evidence that the Bf 109 had been modified to carry bombs. The following day, among the aircraft which came down over England were the Bf 109s flown by *Ofw* Gotthard Goltzsche of 1./JG 77 and *Oblt.* Krug, *Staffelkapitän* of 4./JG 26. Examination by RAF crash investigators and intelligence personnel revealed that on both these aircraft a thin red line had been painted on the fuselage, pointing forward of the pilot's seat at an angle of 45 degrees, as an indication of the bombing angle, and that a bomb jettison handle marked "*Bombenbrennotzug*" was mounted on the starboard side of the cockpit. Thus the RAF already had proof that some Bf 109s were carrying bombs.



The bomb racks and their associated electrical systems were supplied by the aircraft industry which made a special effort to produce these accessories in a few weeks. Similarly, specially formed teams of mechanics quickly carried out the conversions and between 20 September and 1 October, the aircraft of one *Staffel* in each *Gruppe*, or one *Gruppe* within each *Geschwader*, were fitted with bomb racks, creating a *Jabo* force of some 200-250 fighter-bombers.

In most cases it appears to have been left for the fighter units themselves to decide which of their *Staffeln* would convert to the fighter-bomber role for, with the information presently available on known *Jabo Staffeln*, no clear pattern emerges. For example, while in JG 26 the 3., 6. and 9. *Staffeln* were converted to fighter-bombers, this was by no means a standard arrangement, so that in I./JG 51 the 2. *Staffel* became the *Jabo Staffel*, whereas the 2. and 6./JG 52 were the fighter-bomber *Staffeln* in that *Geschwader*. What is certain is that, on account of the fact that the Bf 109 was an awkward aircraft to take off under normal circumstances – and became more so with a bomb aboard – only the most experienced pilots were allocated for bomber work. Once airborne, however, although the manoeuvrability of a fully loaded Bf 109 *Jabo* was affected, its speed carrying a bomb was reduced only by some 20 mph and by only 10 mph with just the rack in place.



A bomb-laden Bf 109 E from 7./JG 54 prepares to take off. Once the bomb had been released, the performance of the *Jabo* Bf 109 E was very much like the normal fighter version.

Of this phase of the air war against Britain, Adolf Galland has stated that the majority of the *Jagdfliieger* viewed their new mission with a definite lack of enthusiasm and did their best to postpone the conversion for as long as possible. Galland himself said he felt "impotent with rage" and wrote that operating the Bf 109 in this way was behaving like a fool whose sword has become blunt in battle and, rather than sharpen the blade, turns it round and tries to use the hilt. *General* Theo Osterkamp, *Jafü* 2 and leader of the fighters under *Luftflotte* 2, was equally indignant at what he saw as a "senseless order", telephoning the *Luftwaffe* Chief of Staff, Jeschonnek, to ask the reason for this decision. Jeschonnek replied that the order had the approval of the *Führer* himself, adding, "We have very reliable information that the English are completely demoralised. The next bomb might be the one that will make them crack."

However, latest research by the authors indicates that it is extremely doubtful that the majority of the *Jagdfliieger* did indeed view their new mission with as little enthusiasm as Galland has maintained in his post-war writings. As mentioned earlier, the Bf 109 was less manoeuvrable and slower when carrying a bomb, but the advantage of the concept was that once the bomb had been released, whether over the target as intended or jettisoned because of attack, the aircraft could revert to the pure fighter role with the loss of only 10 mph due to the fixed bomb rack. Certainly no evidence in support of Galland's claim can be found in the RAF interrogation reports for the period and it is difficult



A Bf 110C heavy fighter of Zerstörergeschwader 26 'Horst Wessel'. Just visible on the nose of this machine, coded 3U+FR of 7./ZG 26, is the original ladybird emblem of III. Gruppe. Later, the 7. Staffel created its own emblem consisting of a double chevron, upon which was superimposed a penguin holding an umbrella. On 27 September, ZG 26 lost six aircraft during an attack on the Parnell aero-engine factory at Yate, near Bristol.



to accept that Major Werner Mölders would have permitted his younger brother Viktor to command a *Jabo Staffel* if the views which Galland has expressed were factual. If any unease about the *Jabo* really existed, it probably originated from the increased difficulty in taking off in a Bf 109 with the added weight of a bomb. Credence for this theory is provided by *Oblt.* Hans-Ekkehard Bob<sup>5</sup> and, indeed, by Galland himself who later wrote: "There was no time to train pilots in the methods of dropping bombs, and the majority dropped their first bombs while flying their newly converted fighter-bombers over London or some other target in Britain."

This natural apprehension is therefore far from the prejudice which Galland describes, though it must be conceded that the manner in which Göring introduced the new weapon was hardly calculated to dispel any misgivings which may have existed. If he had praised his *Jagdflyer* instead of belittling them for their role in the Battle of Britain, and if he had presented the tactical need for their employment in an objective and convincing manner, the fighter personnel may well have submitted with better grace to this new requirement, just as they had earlier submitted to the need to provide close escort for the day bombers. Instead of this, however, Göring lost no time in pointing out to the *Jagdflyer* that he believed the failure of the daylight bombing offensive was due solely to the poor flying of the German fighter pilots who, in his opinion, had proved worthless and, since they had failed to provide adequate protection for the bombers, would themselves now have to carry the bombs to England! They had been assigned this new task because they were no good for anything else and if they failed in this too, then the fighter arm may as well be scrapped. In the words of the *Reichsmarschall* then, the role of the fighter-bomber mission took on the characteristic of a punishment, hardly an auspicious dawning for the new undertaking.

Undoubtedly the blame for this psychological failure must be placed with Göring himself. The members of his immediate staff were of a completely different opinion than their chief and on 25 October the Operations Branch, Office of the Commander in Chief, *Luftwaffe*, issued a message containing a hearty commendation for the fighter-bomber. However, any attempts by the Operations Branch to undo the damage wrought by Göring's direct intervention was of little use; the *Reichsmarschall* was the important figure in the eyes of the pilots and he had, unfortunately, stated the opposite during his inspection visits to the *Jagdgeschwader*. Thus, although the decision to convert a part of the available fighter strength on the Channel to *Jabos* in order to make it impossible for the British to relax by day was undoubtedly the right one under the existing circumstances, the manner in which it was presented to the personnel most directly involved was tragically wrong. Nevertheless, encouraged by the success of 20 September, *Feldmarschall* Kesselring immediately ordered more attacks of the same kind.

On 24 September, the Bf 110s from *Hptm.* Martin Lutz's *Erprobungsgruppe* 210 twice set off from Cherbourg-Ost to attack the Supermarine works at Southampton escorted by 42 Bf 109s from JG 2,

5. See Bob's personal account for confirmation that no training was given.



JG 27 and JG 53 plus six Bf 110s from ZG 76. The unit reported observing hits, one of which during the first attack hit a railway arch and killed 42 workers attempting to reach the air raid shelters.

Dawning fine and cool, the 25th remained at first fairly quiet. With daylight attacks on London reduced and with many bomber units redeploying along the French coast for the resumption of day and night attacks against Southampton and the aviation industry, it was not until shortly before midday that a large formation of He 111s from KG 55 and 11 Bf 110s from *Erp.Gr.* 210 crossed the coast near Weymouth escorted by I. and II./JG 2, II./JG 53 and ZG 26. While *Erp.Gr.* 210 carried out a diversionary attack at Portland, KG 55 flew on to the Bristol Aeroplane Works at Filton and accurately bombed the factory with such devastating force that staff emerging from the shelters at first thought the factory had been completely destroyed. In the event, however, about one month's Beaufighter production was lost, a serious enough situation since the German night bombing had revealed that Britain's night defences were inadequate and Beaufighters were urgently needed as night-fighters.

With more fair weather on the morning of 26 September, the *Luftwaffe* again returned with random forays over southern England, but there were no major developments until the late afternoon when yet again the Supermarine works at Woolston came under attack by 13 Bf 110s from *Erp.Gr.* 210, 37 He 111s from KG 55 and an escort of 92 aircraft drawn from JG 2, JG 53 and ZG 26. This time the raiders succeeded in severely damaging the factory bringing Spitfire production to a temporary halt. Once informed of the damage, Lord Beaverbrook, the minister responsible for aircraft production, ordered the immediate dispersal of all work in order to maintain Spitfire production.

With fine weather on 27 September, overall *Luftwaffe* activity was on a much larger scale than usual

The Battle exposed the flaws in the concept of the Bf 110 heavy fighter which, despite a formidable armament was no match for the RAF's modern fighters. Here, *Luftwaffe* personnel camouflage a Bf 110. All *Luftwaffe* troops were issued with an item of equipment known as a *Zeltbahn*, a triangle of water-repellent camouflage material primarily intended to be worn as a waterproof cape. However, the *Zeltbahn* was designed so that four triangles could be joined together to form a tent.





and attacks were mounted on London, Dover, Maidstone, and the shipbuilding yards at Chatham and Folkestone. The day also marked another change in *Luftwaffe* tactics, with the earlier fine-weather attacks by large bomber forces giving way to smaller and smaller bomber formations with ever greater fighter escort. Typically, about 30 Ju 88s would be committed, but with an escort of between 200 and 300 fighters.

### 30 September

On the morning of 30 September, the *Luftwaffe* considered the weather suitable for *Luftflotten* 2 and 3 to launch their bombers in heavy day attacks and began a series of attacks which presented Fighter Command with its heaviest day's activity of the month. The first attack was carried out by more than 190 aircraft in two waves which crossed the Kent coast and split up to head inland before turning back to release bombs at Odiham and near Brighton. While the defenders made no claims during this period, two Bf 109s from 3./JG 27 crashed near Haywards Heath for a cost of two Hurricanes destroyed and five damaged. While most of the defenders were refuelling, leaving just one squadron immediately ready to intercept, a second raid of some 60 aircraft crossed the coast near Hastings. However, no serious threat developed and after reaching the Biggin Hill - Kenley area, the raid turned south and released bombs near the coast.

At 10.45 hrs a third raid consisting of two formations, each exceeding 50 aircraft, was detected north of the Cherbourg peninsula. Consisting of 60 Bf 109s from JG 2 and JG 53 and 44 Bf 110s from ZG 26, the two formations were on a *freie Jagd* to lure defending fighters into combat. They were intercepted by two squadrons as they crossed the Hampshire coast, 56 Sqn. damaging a Bf 110 and 609 Sqn. shooting down two Bf 109s which fell into the sea.

At 13.00 hrs, after a short lull, a fourth raid comprising at least 150 aircraft was detected approaching the Kent coast. Met by determined opposition after crossing the coast, the attack was dispersed and although only 20 bombers reached London, a large concentration of bombs was dropped in the vicinity of RAF Northolt. In the battles which developed from this attack, no fewer than 11 Bf 109s crashed in the south-eastern counties, three pilots being killed and eight being taken prisoner. Meanwhile, both *Erp.Gr.* 210 and II.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 made repeated attempts during the afternoon to attack the gas works at Poplar, in London, but found the target covered in cloud. Finally, 19 Bf 109s from II.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 found a break in the cloud and dropped 250 kg high explosive and oil bombs on the target.

The *Luftwaffe* was out over Southern England in large numbers again between 16.00 and 17.15 hrs, the target being London. Simultaneously, a feint by escorted Ju 88s was carried out towards Southampton in advance of a larger raid against the Westland factory at Yeovil. This main raid was to be carried out by He 111s from I. and II./KG 55 escorted by JG 2, JG 53 and ZG 26. First intercepted as they approached the Hampshire coast, the bombers were harried all the way to the target area by no fewer than eight squadrons of British fighters. Despite sterling work by the German fighter escort, the RAF attacks left their mark and the bomber formation finally started to break up. Under the weight of persistent attack and unable to locate their target through scattered cloud, the formation jettisoned most of its bombs and fled southwards.

So ended the *Luftwaffe*'s daylight operations for September and, while not readily apparent to either side, the day also marked the last of the great daylight battles over Britain. Fighter Command losses on the 30th amounted to 18 aircraft and five pilots, but with *Luftwaffe* aircraft losses totalling 47, this was one of the few occasions when Fighter Command again inflicted serious defeat on the *Jagd**waffe*. Generally, whenever the fighters of several *Jagdgeschwader* were sent out at once, the *Jagd**waffe* was still able to gain local air superiority, but the day had shown that whenever Fighter Command responded in strength, *Jagd**waffe* losses increased. As for the *Luftwaffe* as a whole, a large number of aircrew had been lost during September including a number of unit leaders, the dead, missing and PoWs including four *Geschwaderkommodoren*, 13 *Gruppenkommandeure* and 31 *Staffelkapitäne*.





*ABOVE AND BELOW:* 'White 9', the Bf 109 E-3 W.Nr. 702 was the aircraft flown by Oblt. Adolf Buhl, the Staffelführer of 1.(J)/LG 2. It is seen here (*TOP*) on the airfield at Pihen/St. Ingelvert with three victory bars on the tail, though by 15 September, Oblt. Buhl had increased his tally to seven when on that date he shot down a Hurricane. The Staffel emblem on the rear fuselage is based on the national insignia applied to most aircraft fighting on behalf of the Nationalists during the Spanish Civil War. Ground crew of 2.(J)/LG 2 posing (*BELOW*) with an SC 250 bomb. Although a fighter Staffel, from September 1940 some of the unit's aircraft were converted to operate in the Jabo role but could be employed purely as fighters as the situation demanded. A large number of the Gruppe's pilots had earlier flown with the Condor Legion in Spain and the "Zylinderhut" (top hat) unit badge of 2.(J)/LG 2 applied to the rear fuselage was based on the insignia of 2./J88 (see Volume One, Section 2, The Spanish Civil War).



*ABOVE:* At the start of the war, Hptm. Walter Oesau - already with 8 victories achieved in Spain - was Staffelführer of 7./JG 51 and between August and November 1940, was Kommandeur of III./JG 51. He scored his twentieth victory on 18 August and was awarded the Ritterkreuz two days later.





# September-October 1940



*LEFT:* On 16 September 1940, the Staffelkapitän of 1./JG 51, Oblt. Hermann Joppien (centre), was awarded the Ritterkreuz following his twentieth and twenty-first victories. Standing behind Joppien is Lt. Heinz Bär, also of 1./JG 51 who, as an Oberfeldwebel on 2 September, was shot down and rescued from the Channel. Five days later he was promoted to Leutnant and from the Summer of 1940 to early 1941 would claim 14 victories.



*ABOVE AND RIGHT:* Two views of a Bf 109 E-3 from 11./JG 51 based at Desvre. The aircraft appears to be under repair after sustaining slight underwing radiator damage and has also its 20 mm MG FF wing cannon removed.







**ABOVE AND RIGHT:**

Uffz. Karl-Heinz Bock's Bf 109 E-1, W.Nr.6294, of 7./JG 26 at Broomhill Farm, Camber, near Rye. During a fighter sweep on 17 September, Bock's engine developed a fault and he had to make a forced landing. Note the small identity number and bar which were characteristic of III./JG 26 aircraft throughout the Battle of Britain. Another photograph of this machine appears in Volume 2, Page 142.



**Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-1 of 7./JG 26 flown by Uffz. Karl-Heinz Bock**

'White 2', the Bf 109 E-1 of Uffz. Karl-Heinz Bock of JG 26 which was forced to make a wheels-up landing near Rye after experiencing engine trouble during a freie Jagd over the London area on the afternoon of 17 September. Finished in a high demarcation 02/71 scheme, unusually for an aircraft of the III. Gruppe, the sides of the fuselage and fin carried a light mottling of what is believed to have been 02. The spinner, cowling and rudder were painted yellow and the JG 26 'Schlageter' shield was carried beneath the windscreen on both sides of the fuselage. Like many E-1s of the summer battles, the aircraft had been fitted with the later style of canopy.







*LEFT:* In Luftwaffe slang, an accident such as this, probably as a result of the pilot applying the brakes too hard, was referred to as a 'Fliegerdenkmal'; a pilot's monument. The Bf 109 E-1 here is 'Yellow 2' of 6./JG 52, photographed at Calais in September 1940.

(*ABOVE*) Further to the subject of Luftwaffe slang, if the aircraft turned right over, as with this Bf 109 E-3 from JG 53, it was referred to as a 'Damenlandung' or 'lady's landing' on account of the fact that it was 'on her back with her legs in the air'!

## Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-1 of 6./JG 52

Wearing a 70/71 upper camouflage scheme, the fuselage sides appear to have been repainted in 65 and then mottled over with the upper colours but with the Hakenkreuz masked off to leave a surrounding square of 65. The entire cowling is yellow, as is the rudder and tip of the spinner. Although still fitted with an early canopy, the aircraft had both pilot armour and a rear view mirror added. The striking 6./JG 52 emblem - almost four feet in length - was carried on both sides of the cowling and was dark blue with white details.



*LEFT:* Another view of the attractive eagle emblem of 6./JG 52 with, in the background, a military band.

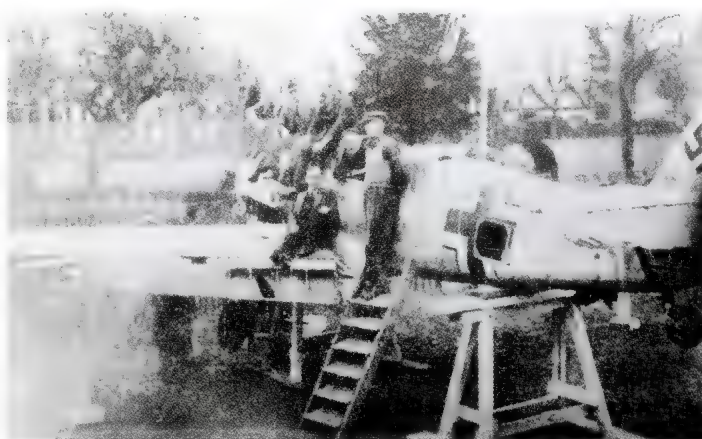




## Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-1 of 9./JG 27 flown by Fw. Ernst Schulz

This profile of 'Brown 7', the Bf 109 E-1 flown by Fw. Ernst Schulz of JG 27 is largely based on the photograph below and Crashed Enemy Aircraft Report No.34/1 of 19 September 1940. The aircraft is understood to have been finished in a high demarcation 02/71 scheme with 02 mottling of varying densities on the fuselage sides. The rudder, spinner and cowlings were painted yellow, with the addition of three brown concentric rings on the spinner and a large brown '7' on each side of the cowlings.

*RIGHT:* Having taken off as part of a bomber escort shortly after noon on 18 September, this aircraft, flown by Fw. Ernst Schulz of 9./JG 27, was attacked over Canterbury by Spitfires of 603 Sqn. Although little damaged, the pilot was forced down and made a successful landing near Sellinge, Kent. Fw. Schulz climbed out of his aircraft and then attempted to escape into a nearby wood, but he was shot by members of the Royal Tank Corps and so severely wounded in the left lung that he died on 26 September. This is the only known photograph of Fw. Ernst Schulz's aircraft.



*RIGHT:* This Bf 109 E-1 at Westminster is 'Yellow 1', flown by Gefr. Walter Glöckner of 9./JG 27 on 18 September. After being damaged in combat over Canterbury by 603 Sqn. Spitfires, Gefr. Glöckner forced landed at Sandwich where he made a good belly landing and set fire to his aircraft. The aircraft number appeared on the engine cowling as was III./JG 27's style and is therefore not visible in this photograph.





*BELOW:* Major Galland being congratulated on his 40th victory by his chief mechanic, Uffz. Meyer, 24 September. Note the absence of the Mickey Mouse emblem.



*ABOVE:* The appearance of Galland's W.Nr. 5819 changed over the months he flew it. In this photograph, probably taken in November or early December at Audembert, the aircraft still lacks the Mickey Mouse emblem but now has a capped black-green spinner tipped with white. Note also the machine has been fitted with a ZFR 4 telescopic sight for identifying aircraft at long range.



*LEFT:* Major Galland, with back to camera, Geschwaderkommodore of JG 26, after achieving his fortieth victory, a Hurricane of 17 Sqn. flown by P/O H.A.C. Bird-Wilson, on 24 September. The aircraft in the background marked with horizontal bars each side of the fuselage Balkenkreuz, was flown by Oblt. Walter Horten, the Geschwader Technical Officer.

#### **Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-4 flown by Major Adolf Galland, Geschwaderkommodore of JG 26**

Adolf Galland's Bf 109 E-4, W.Nr.5819 circa 24 September. This aircraft was finished in an 02/71 upper camouflage with a mottle of both of these colours in varying densities on the fuselage sides. The upper and lower cowlings were yellow, as was the rudder, which had forty black Abschussbalken applied on a rectangle of the original blue 65. The spinner was also yellow but the backplate remained in 70. The JG 26 'Schlageter' shield was carried on both sides of the fuselage beneath the windscreen but Galland's famous black and white mouse emblem was not carried on the aircraft at this time, photographic evidence suggesting it was not painted on until December.





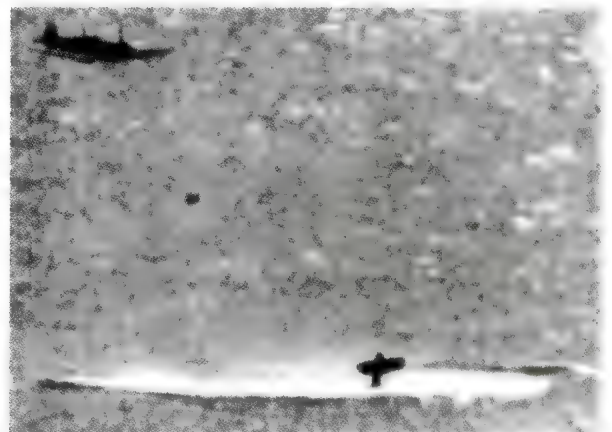


**ABOVE:** The tail of Oblt. Walter Schneider's Bf 109 E at Marquise on 23 September. Oblt. Schneider had been made Staffelführer of 4./JG 26 on 20 September. In this photograph his Warte (chief mechanic) proudly paints the rudder with two Abschussbalken representing two Hurricanes claimed during a massive freie Jagd north of the Thames Estuary on the 23rd. These were Schneider's sixth and seventh victories.



**LEFT:** A photograph taken seconds before Uffz. Friedrich Dilthey's Bf 109 E-4 ditched into the Channel off Folkstone on 23 September. At about 09.00 hrs that morning, aircraft from 4./JG 2 took off to escort bombers to the English coast. They were then to leave the bombers and patrol while the bombers went on, and then escort them from the coast home. All went well until Uffz. Dilthey was attacked and severely damaged by two 72 Sqn. Spitfires flown by Flt. Lt. Cosby and Sgt. Glew, whose Spitfire can also be seen in the accompanying photograph.

**BELOW:** Sgt. Glew's Spitfire flies over Dilthey's ditched Bf 109. On Folkstone harbour pier, Army officer 2nd. Lt. Jacobs saw that Dilthey, wounded in the shoulder and with a broken leg, was in difficulties in the water and jumped in to support him until the pair were picked up by a fishing boat.



**LEFT:** The Staffelführer and pilots of 9./JG 2 pictured at Le Havre on 26 September preparing for the mission in which JG 2 put up 38 Bf 109s to escort KG 55's He 111s during their attack on the Supermarine factory at Woolston. From the left: Uffz. Peter Neumann-Merkel (killed on 30 September), Oblt. Carl-Hans Röders (Staffelführer), Uffz. Rudolf Rothenfelder, Fw. Maier, Ofw. Brunkhorst and Gefr. Wilhelm Schaar. Apart from Neumann-Merkel, Röders, Maier and Schaar would all later be killed in action.

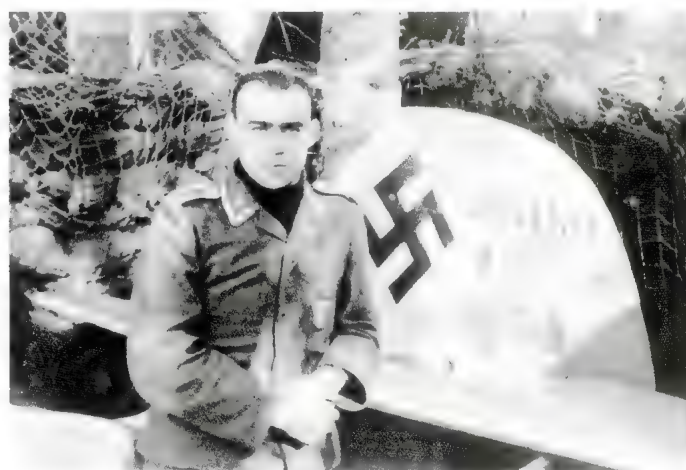




ABOVE: Seated at the table second from left is Hptm. Horst Liensberger, the Gruppenkommandeur of V.(Z)/LG 1. On 27 September, Hptm. Liensberger and Bordfunker Uffz. Albert Köpge were flying in the Bf 110C-2 coded L1 + XB (W.Nr. 3560) — seen here parked immediately behind the hedge — escorting other Bf 110 fighter-bombers in a raid on London. In the words of a subsequent Luftwaffe report, all offensive forces “encountered tenacious and energetic enemy resistance.” British fighters intercepted V.(Z)/LG 1 at 19,000 ft and in a series of running battles the Gruppe lost a total of seven Bf 110s shot down, one of which was Hptm. Liensberger’s. Descending to tree-top height pursued by a Hurricane, Liensberger’s Bf 110 was hit in both engines. Finally, having exhausted all his ammunition, the Hurricane pilot, P/O Percy Burton of 249 Sqn., is believed to have rammed the Bf 110 and severed its tail. Both aircraft crashed at Hailsham and all three aircrew were killed. Beyond L1+XB is L1+YB and in the far background is the Bf 110C-4 coded 3M + AA (W.Nr. 2116), normally flown by the Geschwaderkommodore of ZG 2, Obstlt. Friedrich Vollbracht. On 4 September, this aircraft was being flown by the Geschwaderadjutant, Oblt. Wilhelm Schäfer and Bordfunker Uffz. Heinz Bendjus when it was damaged in combat with fighters from 43 and 602 Sqn. The aircraft forced landed near Shoreham, Sussex, where Schäfer and Bendjus were captured unhurt.



ABOVE: On 28 September, the use of small formations of Ju 88s escorted by large numbers of fighters was successful in bringing the RAF to battle and seventeen British fighters were shot down for the loss of only three German fighters and one pilot. One of the successful pilots on this date was Oblt. Gustav ‘Micky’ Sprick, the Staffelfkapitän of 8./JG 26 who had been with the Staffel since 23 September 1939. In this photograph, Sprick has just landed after claiming his 20th victory, a Hurricane of 501 Sqn. over Canterbury.



ABOVE: Uffz. Hugo Dahmer, an experienced pilot of 6./JG 26 posing at Marquise with his Bf 109, the rudder of which is marked with 10 victories. Dahmer’s ninth victory, a Hurricane, was shot down over Kent on 30 September.





From pre-war days (*ABOVE*) Josef Heinzeller named all his aircraft after his pet dog 'Schnauzl', its name and the associated emblem on the cowling being seen in these views. (*RIGHT*) Unteroffizier Josef Heinzeller flying his Bf 109 E-3 over the Channel, Summer 1940. (*BOTTOM*) Heinzeller also flew as a Feldwebel with 2./JG 3 and his 'Black 9' is seen after an emergency landing on the French coast at the end of the summer. In late September, he flew Jabo operations in a Bf 109 E modified to carry an ETC bomb rack (*BELOW*).







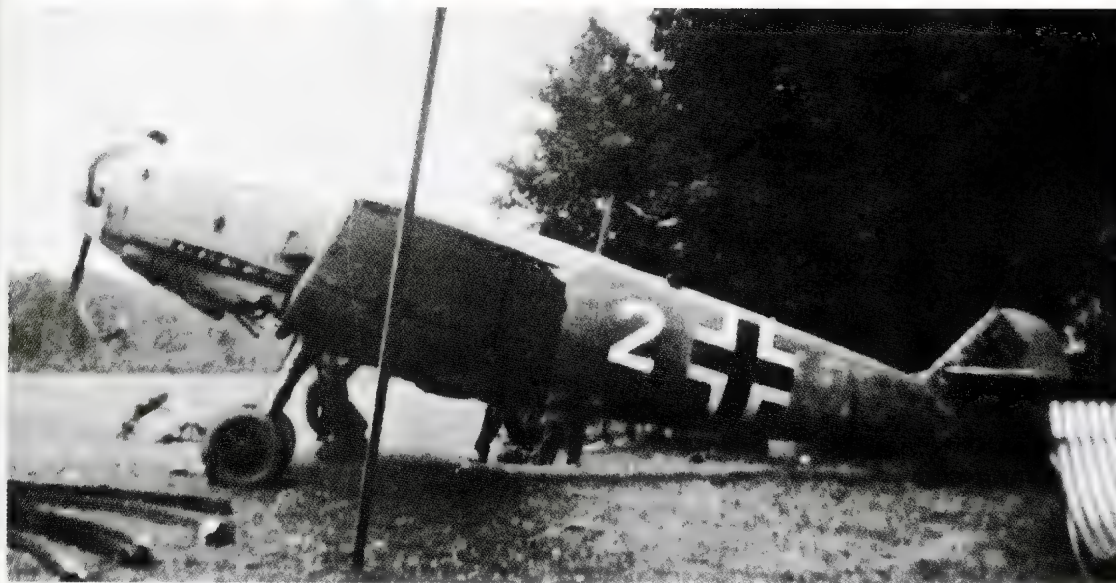
After a series of losses, II./JG 52 was withdrawn from Peuplingue on the Channel coast and between 18 August and 25 September was based in Germany. The photograph (ABOVE) shows aircraft of Lt. Johannes Steinhoff's 4. Staffel in early October, shortly after the Gruppe returned to Peuplingue. As soon as the Gruppe returned to combat, losses again began to mount and on 27 September five pilots and seven aircraft were lost including Fw. Franz Bogasch of 4./JG 52 whose 'White 5' is seen (RIGHT) being removed from the crash site east of St. Nicholas at Wade, Kent. Following a freie Jagd sweep between Canterbury and south-east London, the Staffel was attacked by Spitfires and, temporarily blinded by petrol spurting from his fuel tank, Bogasch made a forced landing in a field and collided with anti-invasion obstacles which broke off one wing and the rudder.



ABOVE: The 4./JG 52 emblem as seen on Fw. Bogasch's aircraft.





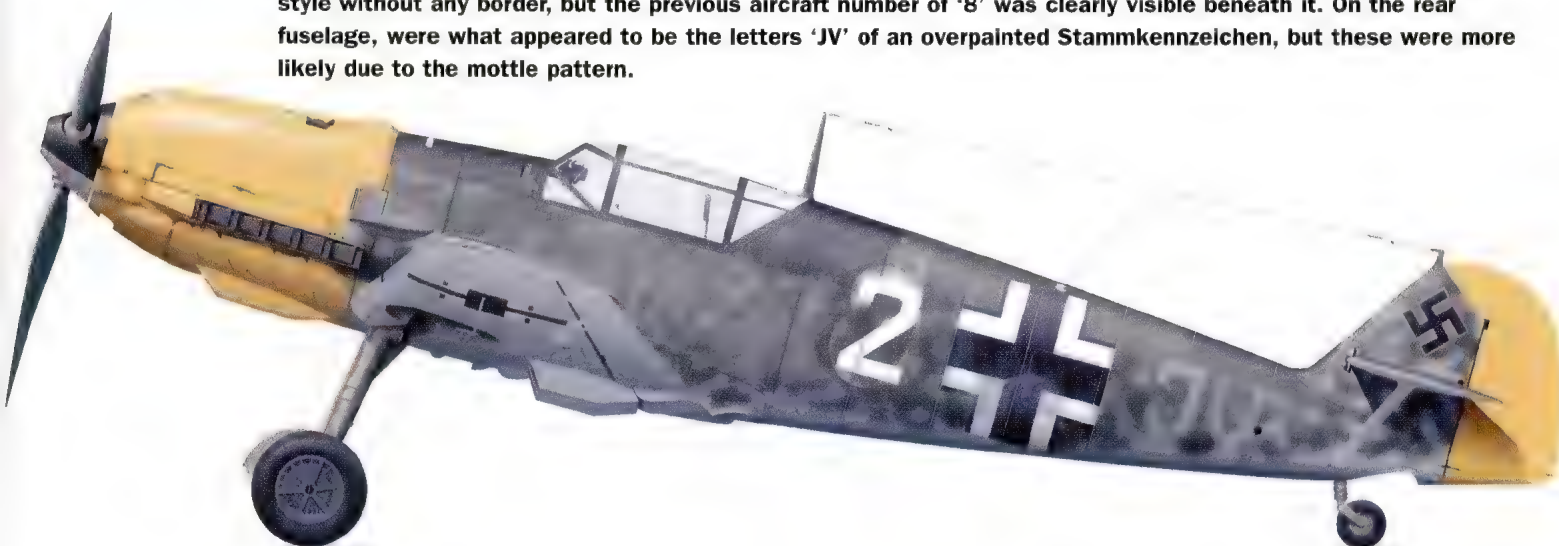


ABOVE AND RIGHT: JG 52 lost two more pilots during a bomber escort mission on 30 September, one being Gefr. Erich Mummert from 4. Staffel. Six aircraft from this Staffel were attacked by Spitfires and although the Bf 109 pilots tried to form a defensive circle, their fuel situation soon compelled them to make for home. Almost immediately the Spitfires pounced and in the ensuing melee Mummert's Bf 109 was mistaken for a Spitfire and attacked by another Bf 109 which hit the radiator. When the engine temperature rose, Mummert realised he could not reach home and, missing one airfield, made a wheels-up landing on the edge of Detling aerodrome where he was taken prisoner by members of a resident Avro Anson squadron. These photographs show Mummert's aircraft after being raised to its undercarriage.



## Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-1 of 4./JG 52 flown by Gefr. Erich Mummert

This aircraft forced landed on Detling aerodrome during the afternoon of 30 September. Originally finished in a mid-demarcation 70/71 upper scheme, the sides of the fuselage and fin were oversprayed with a dense 70/71 mottle. The cowling and rudder were yellow and the 4. Staffel 'Red Cat' emblem was carried on the starboard side of the fuselage only. The black-green spinner had a one-quarter segment painted white. The white '2' was of a squared style without any border, but the previous aircraft number of '8' was clearly visible beneath it. On the rear fuselage, were what appeared to be the letters 'JV' of an overpainted Stammkennzeichen, but these were more likely due to the mottle pattern.







**THIS PAGE:** On 30 August, Uffz. Karl Wolff crashed in 'Yellow 15', subject of the colour profile and seen in this series of photographs prior to being removed for repair. Exactly one month later, on 30 September, 3./JG 52 carried out a freie Jagd sweep to London but was intercepted by defending fighters. During the dog-fight which ensued, Uffz. Wolff was wounded in the leg and had to bale out when the engine of his 'Yellow 14' cut out and he lost control during violent evasive manoeuvres. Aircraft and pilot came down in Sussex, the aircraft crashing at Clayton Farm, Peasmarsh, Sussex while Wolff landed at Udimore.



#### **Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-3 of 3./JG 52, flown by Uffz. Karl Wolff**

'Yellow 15' was finished in a high demarcation 02/71 upper scheme with 71 mottling on fuselage sides and, as with many other Bf 109s of the period, the undersurface 65 wrapped around the wing leading edges. The rudder, cowlings and the tips of the tail-planes and main wings were painted white with the spinner painted half-white and half green 70. The 1./JG 52 'Running Boar' emblem was carried on both sides of the cowlings and the aircraft had been fitted with an early style canopy with head armour and a rear-view mirror.

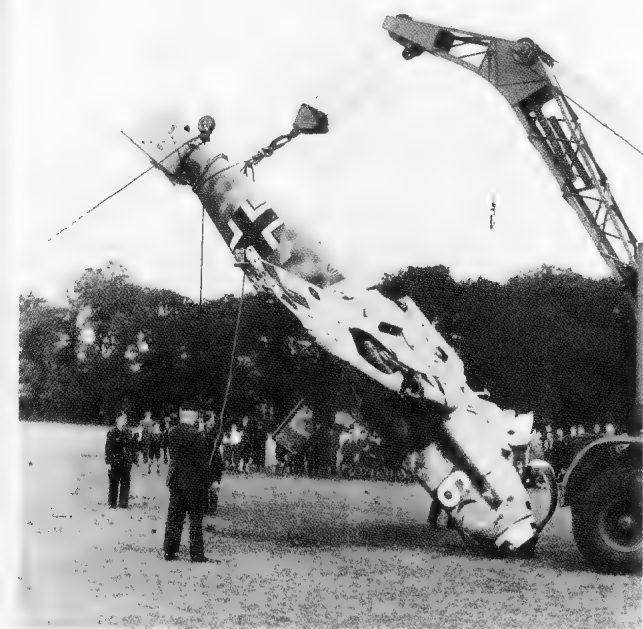




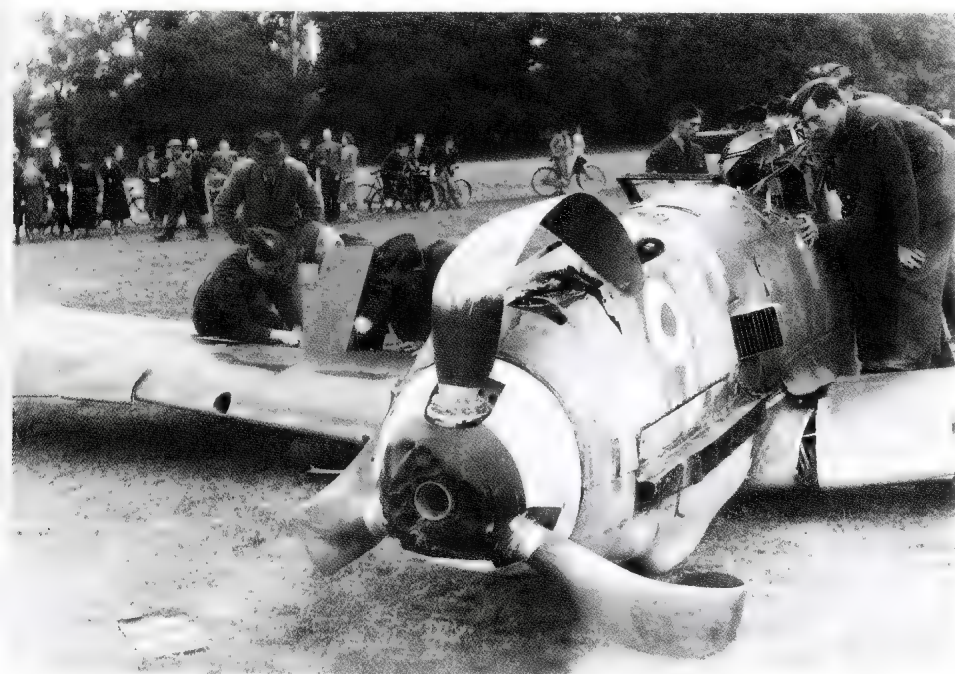


## Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-1 of 7./JG 27 flown by Oblt. Karl Fischer

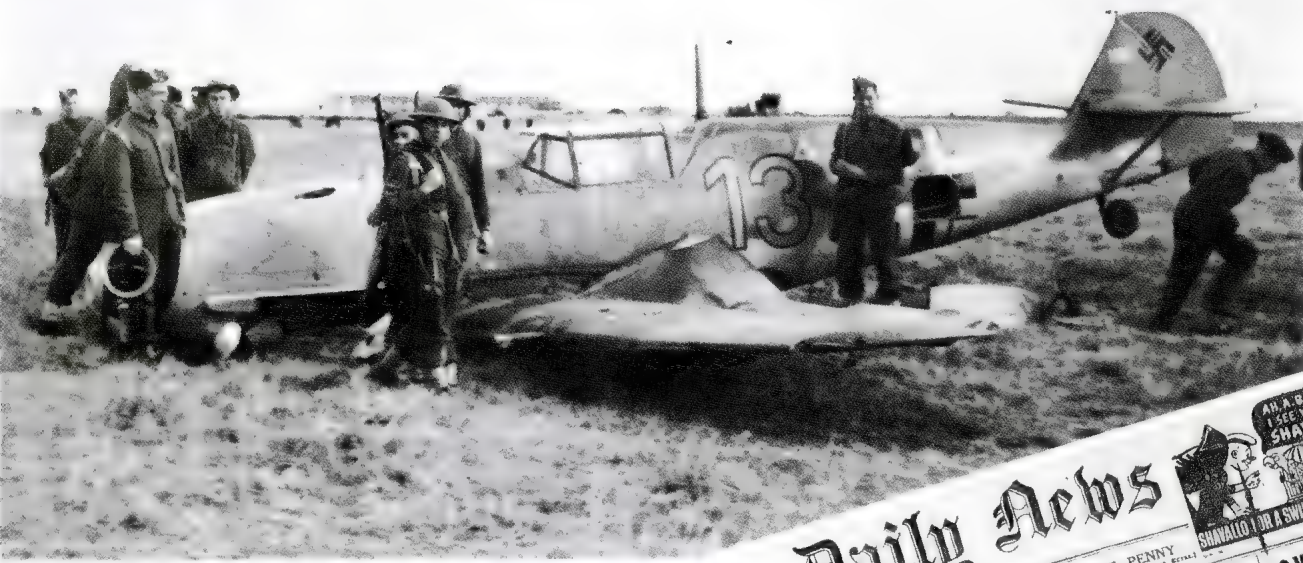
Flown by Oblt. Karl Fisher, Bf 109 E-1 'White 9' of JG 27 was finished in an 02/71 upper scheme with the fin and fuselage sides carrying a fairly heavily applied mottle of 02 through which the overpainted Stammkennzeichen PH+LV was still faintly visible. The rear half of the spinner was painted white with the forward section remaining in black-green. The upper and lower cowlings and rudder were painted yellow with the white '9' on the cowling sides appearing on a masked-off vertical rectangle of the fuselage mottling. Although an E-1, the aircraft was fitted with the later, heavier framed canopy which had probably helped the pilot to escape injury when the aircraft overturned while forced landing in Windsor Great Park on 30 September.



**LEFT AND BELOW:** Oblt. Karl Fischer of 7./JG 27 was flying a bomber escort mission on 30 September when, on the way to the target, the formation was attacked by fighters. Although this aircraft became involved in a dogfight, combat was broken off and Fischer was unaware that his aircraft had been hit until an R/T message from his Rottenflieger informed him that his aircraft was streaming a white petrol plume. Looking at his fuel gauge, Fischer saw that his tank was almost empty so he made a forced landing in Windsor Great Park, during which the aircraft overturned but was little damaged. The aircraft was later displayed (**BELOW RIGHT**) outside the grounds of Windsor Castle.







ABOVE AND BELOW: Unlucky Thirteen. On the afternoon of 30 September, Fw. Walter Scholz of 3./JG 53 took off on a bomber escort mission. The bombers were joined between 18,000 and 19,000 ft near the English coast but, according to Scholz, this aircraft ran out of fuel and forced landed at Langley, near Eastbourne in Sussex. The aircraft, a Bf 109 E-4, 'Yellow 13', W.Nr.1325, had a yellow-orange nose and tail and, although not visible in the photographs, was reported to have had a yellow horizontal bar behind the cross. Another anomaly is that although the pilot stated on interrogation that there had been no combat, the RAF crash report mentions a few .303 strikes in the engine and cooling system. Note the four Abschußbalken on the fin and, for an E-4, the unusual position of the Hakenkreuz. Needless to say, the contemporary press (RIGHT) made the most of the fuselage number thirteen.

**Sussex Daily News**  
THURSDAY, 3 OCTOBER, 1940  
72nd YEAR  
ONE PENNY  
(PUBLISHED BY THE SUSSEX PRESS CO. LTD.)

**CABINET expected to Make announcement**  
OR MR. BEVIN AND JEFF COOPER?  
not, as well as in other departments expected to be announced immediately. The Prime Minister is expected to make an announcement in the House of Commons on Monday afternoon.

**CHIEFS FROM SWEDES**  
BRITISH TROOPS HOME

**EARLY LONDON ALL CLEAR**  
THE last night's bombing raid on London had its usual accompaniment of sirens and searchlights, but there was no attack.

**NAZI RAIDER SHOT DOWN IN SUSSEX WAS NO. 13!**  
M.E. 109 BROUGHT DOWN IN S.E. ENGLAND ON MONDAY AFTERNOON

**R.A.F. SCORE 10-1**  
**LEWIS GUN VICTIMS**

**OVERSEAS SCHEME POSTPONED FOR WINTER**  
THE GOVERNMENT have decided that until further notice no more children are to be sent overseas under the Children's Overseas Reception Scheme. The official announcement was made yesterday.

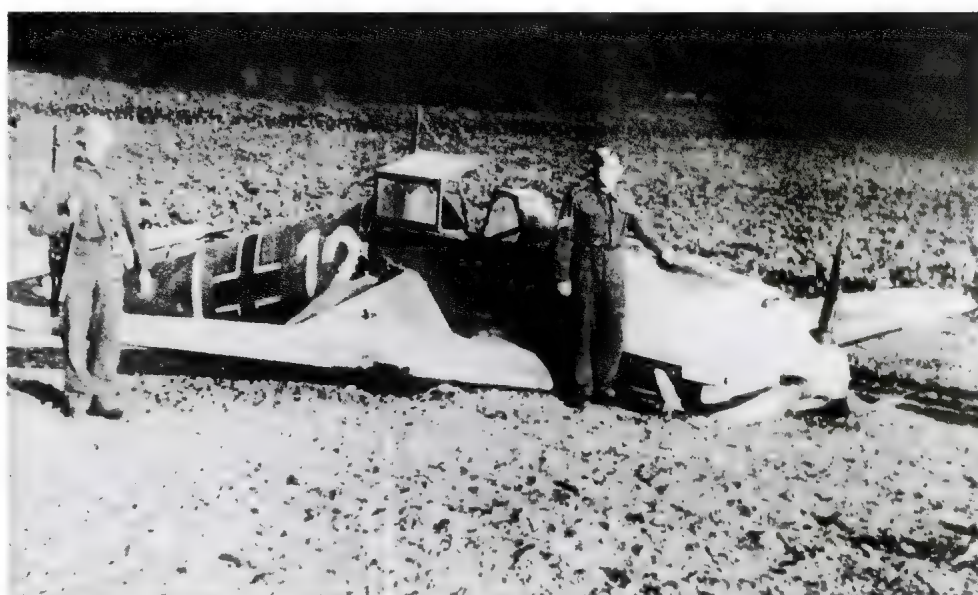
**AN A.B. JONES, I SEE YOU USE SHAVALLO!**  
SHAVALLO 1 OR A SWIFT SMOOTH SHALE







*ABOVE AND RIGHT:* Two views of Uffz. Ernst Poschenrieder's Bf 109 E-4, 'White 12' of 7./JG 53, laying in a field at Strood, near Rochester, where it came to rest after being shot down during an escort mission on the early afternoon of 30 September. Although the bright sunlight in these photographs suggests the cowling was white, the RAF crash report on this machine clearly states it was yellow. Unfortunately, in both photographs the tail area is hidden by the guarding British soldiers, but the view of this aircraft in Volume Two, Section 2, Page 189 indicates that the Hakenkreuz on the fin had once been painted out and, when re-applied, was positioned on the rudder.



## **Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-4 of 7./JG 53 flown by Uffz. Ernst Poschenrieder**

On 30 September, Bf 109 E-4, 'White 12' of 7./JG 53 was being flown on an escort mission over Kent when it was attacked and damaged, ultimately crash-landing near Strood and seriously injuring the pilot, Uffz. Ernst Poschenrieder. Finished in an upper scheme of 02/71, the fuselage carried a heavily applied green 71 mottle with the entire cowling, rudder and tips of the main wings painted yellow. The spinner was fitted with a nose cap and as with many JG 53 aircraft, although the white areas of the Balkenkreuz had been significantly reduced, the '12' and vertical Gruppe bar remained boldly displayed in white.





## October 1940

# The Hour of the Fighter-bombers

In view of the losses its bomber formations had suffered throughout August and September, the *Luftwaffe* now decided to all but abandon daylight bombing operations and, instead, the bomber forces of *Luftflotten* 2 and 3 began to consolidate in favour of an intensification of the night Blitz. But while the *Kampfgeschwader* attempted to destroy Britain's industry and the population's morale by night, *Luftwaffe* planning called for the RAF to be extended and exhausted by day defending against waves of *Jabos* accompanied by large numbers of fighters. Thus the air war entered another new phase, with the majority of daylight bombing operations being undertaken by the *Jagdwaaffe*. Of this period, Dowding was later to report that of all the tactics employed by the *Luftwaffe*, those of October were the most difficult to counter and, if not intercepted, would clearly contribute by day to the night bombardment of London. Moreover, the *Jabos* had every chance of penetrating to London for they had the advantage of being much faster than a standard bomber formation, the usual interval between the first warning of attack and the fall of bombs in the London area being just 20 minutes. As for Galland's criticisms of the concept, he seems to have disregarded the fact that now the *Jagdwaaffe* was freed from the hampering responsibility of escorting the twin-engined bomber formations, its fighters clearly benefited from being able to operate at a greater height. Thus the advantage in these circumstances was with the Germans who were now in a position to open combat by diving down on the British fighters.

The first major action of 1 October did not develop until mid-morning when, soon after 10.30 hrs, a mixed formation of some 80 Bf 109s and Bf 110s from JG 2, JG 53 and ZG 26 approached the Portsmouth area in two waves. Although met by determined opposition, in a reversal of the defeat of the previous day the encounter resulted in a victory for the German force. Four Hurricanes were shot down in this action, two being claimed by JG 2's Helmut Wick as his 35th and 36th victories and two more by the *Zerstörers* of ZG 26 which demonstrated that only under particularly favourable circumstances could these heavily armed machines still play a useful role.

At 13.12 hrs, some 50 aircraft crossed the coast at Dover in two waves with about 30 making their way inland before turning back towards France. These were followed at about 14.02 hrs by another group of approximately 100 aircraft which headed in two waves towards Biggin Hill. While the second group withdrew soon after crossing the coast, the first, which included a few *Jabos*, remained for some time over Kent and Sussex and released bombs in the New Romney area. The RAF responded by sending 13 fighter squadrons against these aircraft, but only one German aircraft was lost, this being a Bf 109 E-1 of 4./JG 26 which exploded over Falmer after being attacked by two Hurricanes of 41 Sqn. The pilot, *Uffz.* Hans Bluder, was killed.

**RIGHT:** A yellow-cowled Bf 109, believed to be from 3./Erprobungsgruppe 210, taxis from its dispersal heavily laden with an SC 250 bomb. After a brief two-week rest from combat missions, 3./Erp.Gr. 210 returned to combat on 15 October and in the period 15 - 29 October, this Staffel flew thirteen missions with the loss of only one aircraft.







LEFT: In II./JG 53, the 6 Staffel became the *Jabo* Staffel and in this photograph one of the unit's aircraft is seen taxiing to the take-off point with a 250 kg bomb destined for a target in England. Note the capped spinner to the yellow nose and, typical of JG 53, the old style fuselage Balkenkreuz and mid-demarcation camouflage.

In the late afternoon, three successive waves of 70 aircraft crossed the coast and while some headed for the Kenley area, the remainder, comprising 38 Bf 109s from II.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 escorted by JG 26 and JG 51, made for Central London. Although the formation was intercepted and dispersed, most of the high-flying *Jabos* managed to fly on to drop their bombs on the city's southern outskirts before withdrawing eastwards. In addition to the physical damage caused, their passage across Kent to outer London had triggered air-raid warnings and vital war work was interrupted as workers made for the shelters. Only one of the escort was lost on this raid, a Bf 109 E-4 from I./JG 51, which was shot down, the pilot, *Uffz.* Garnith, being captured after baling out.

Taking advantage of clear skies on 2 October, the *Jabos* were again out in force over south-eastern England carrying out similar attacks on London and Biggin Hill. LG 2 and the entire *Geschwader* strength of JG 51 flew in at great height over the southern counties throughout the morning. On this occasion the aircraft released their SC 250 bombs over the suburbs of south-east London and, despite bitter combat with the defending fighters, escaped without loss.

On 5 October, the *Jabos* were again out in large numbers with heavily escorted formations up to *Staffel* strength taking part in training bombing sorties over southern England. After a low-level attack on Dover by about 30 Bf 109s, some 150 aircraft including the *Jabos* of JG 51, *Erprobungsgruppe* 210 and LG 2 crossed the coast near Lympne, while another 100 fighters flew in towards London. Later, another 120 aircraft crossed the Kent coast heading towards London and the airfields. By the end of the day Fighter Command had mounted almost 1,200 sorties to combat the German formations, losing five aircraft and one pilot. *Jagdwaaffe* losses amounted to seven Bf 109s, three of the pilots being rescued from the sea by the *Seenotdienst* and four being taken prisoner. Two Bf 110s from *Erp.Gr.* 210 were also lost while attacking West Malling, including one flown by the acting *Gruppenkommandeur*, *Oblt.* Werner Weymann, which crashed into the Channel; Weymann was the fourth *Gruppenkommandeur* the unit had lost in action since 15 August yet the unit's morale still remained remarkably high.

The return of bad weather on the 6th again prevented any major sorties taking place, but on 7 October, the offensive effort was again borne by the bomb-carrying Bf 109s and Bf 110s of *Luftflotte* 2. However, their attacks on this date are noteworthy only for the singular lack of success achieved compared to the number of sorties carried out. *Luftwaaffe* records for the period do not attempt to conceal the facts and state quite clearly that all units reported strong and tenacious fighter defences. In conditions of fair visibility, variable cloud and showers, an almost continuous stream of Bf 109s appeared over Kent during the late morning, these aircraft attacking London, London Docks and other targets in Southern England. In the first attack, nine Bf 109s from I.(*Jagd*)/LG 2, now also operating in the *Jabo* role, were sent out to attack Dulwich railway station escorted by JG 3. Near Dover, the formation was attacked by Spitfires and three of the *Jabos* were forced to jettison their bombs, but the



remainder pressed on and attacked the target. Fifteen minutes later, a small force of eight aircraft from I./JG 51 which had set out to attack West London was also attacked by Spitfires and three aircraft were lost. Then, 30 minutes later, twenty Bf 109s from II.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 with JG 27 as escort attacked West London and observed bomb impacts in the target area. During the afternoon, both I.(*Jagd*) and II.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 each made their second attack of the day. First to cross the coast were 19 Bf 109s from II.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 escorted by JG 26 and JG 27, but they were unable to reach their target due to strong fighter defences which, they reported, consisted of two Spitfire squadrons and one Hurricane squadron. Two aircraft from Oblt. Vogeler's 4. *Staffel* were shot down: *Uffz.* Georg Mörschel, making his 13th war flight, ran out of luck when his aircraft was hit in the cooling system and his engine caught fire. Making a forced landing at Tunbridge Wells, Mörschel only just managed to crawl clear of his burning aircraft and was captured, wounded. *Uffz.* Hans Bley had just crossed the coast at 16,000 feet when his aircraft was attacked by a fighter. With his fuel tank holed, Bley jettisoned his bomb and made for home, but his petrol ran out and he came down in the sea. He climbed aboard his rubber dinghy and was picked up by the Dungeness lifeboat after an hour in the water. Bley spent the rest of the war as a PoW.

Later in the afternoon, ten *Jabos* from II./JG 3 attacked London and scored hits north-west of the West India Docks and, an hour later, I.(*Jagd*)/LG 2 flew its second mission of the day escorted by JG 26 and JG 27. The attack was directed against the docks in the bow of the River Thames and new fires were observed in several sectors of the city. In the west, *Luftflotte* 3 sent 20 Ju 88s from KG 51 to attack the Westland works at Yeovil escorted by 52 Bf 109s from JG 2, seven from JG 53 and 39 Bf 110s from ZG 26. None of the escorting Bf 109s was lost in this attack, but the Bf 110s showed again that they were no real match against determined RAF fighter opposition and seven of ZG 26's big twin-engined fighters were shot down. Elsewhere, far from being progressively weakened, the RAF was retaliating with increased strength, the day's activity costing the *Luftwaffe* nine Bf 109s with six pilots taken prisoner, one killed and two rescued after baling out.

Two of the losses on the 7th are particularly interesting, one being *Oblt.* Viktor Mölders, *Staffelkapitän* of 2./JG 51 and brother of the famous *Major* Mölders, who was captured after forced landing his damaged and overheating Bf 109 E-4 coded 'Black 1'. The other was the Bf 109 E-4/B flown by *Lt.* Erich Meyer, also of 2./JG 51, who set out shortly after midday to escort *Jabos* attacking oil tanks at London Docks. Two *Staffeln* of fighters were protecting about six *Jabos* and they were flying at 19,000 ft over Maidstone on the return journey when they encountered the Hurricanes of 501 Squadron. Meyer's aircraft received hits in the radiator and the temperature rose, forcing the pilot to ditch in the Channel. Meyer's rubber dinghy was sighted by a *Lysander* and after about two hours in the water he was picked up by a British motor-boat. However, the loss of Meyer's fighter has an interesting sequel which began in the Summer of 1974 when the net of a local fisherman trawling off the Kent coast snagged on an underwater object. An investigation by local divers discovered that it was entangled in the wreckage of a small aircraft, later identified as a Bf 109. In July 1976, through the combined efforts of divers and an aeronautical museum, the remains of Meyer's fighter were recovered and brought ashore for restoration and display<sup>6</sup>.

At the end of the day, a total of about 15 offensive operations had been launched against London and three of the *Jabo* attacks conducted by Bf 109s had failed to penetrate to the target area despite being covered by strong fighter forces. Some aircraft had been forced to attack alternative targets while others had to release their bombs too early over London. *Luftflotte* 3, too, which committed 20 Ju 88s in a daylight attack against an airfield in central England reported that "...enemy fighter defences showed a tenacity unknown so far".

*Jabo* attacks were mounted on ten of the 17 days between 8-24 October but with varying degrees of success and the results could often not be observed due to cloud cover which obscured the target. The ideal weather for *Jabo* attacks was in conditions of scattered cloud which provided sufficient cover yet was not heavy enough to obscure the target or render accurate orientation impossible. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, some *Jabo* raids had to be called off because the weather cleared up immediately before or over the target and it was considered too dangerous to allow the fighter-bombers to continue to the target.

6. A full account of the loss and recovery of this aircraft is the subject of the fascinating and highly recommended book *The Reluctant Messerschmitt* by Don Everson, published by Portcullis Press Ltd.



**RIGHT AND BELOW:** This Bf 109 E-1 shows the crosshatch scheme used by some units towards the end of 1940. This evidently newly-delivered aircraft belonged to JG 54 at Campagne and although still lacking a II. Gruppe horizontal bar aft of the fuselage Balkenkreuz, the black rectangle ahead of the windscreen marks the beginning of the II. Gruppe 'Lion of Aspern' emblem.



**BELOW:** This Bf 109 E-1 has been fitted with a later type of canopy incorporating curved head armour and is believed to have been the machine allocated to the Gruppenadjutant of III./JG 2. Unfortunately, the dappled shadows from nearby trees has obscured any victory bars which might have been painted on the rudder, but the Gruppe symbol behind the Balkenkreuz is clearly not of the same proportions as the Stab symbols. Note, too, the coloured MG troughs on the cowling and the flames painted on the spinner.



**BELOW:** 'Brown 5' of 6./JG 51 photographed in October 1940.



**BELOW:** 'Yellow 1', the aircraft flown by the Staffelkapitän of the 3. Staffel in an unidentified Jagdgeschwader after crash landing on a beach in France, around October 1940.





## Luftwaffe units equipped with the Bf 109 – 26 October 1940

As prepared by 6./Abteilung OKL (Quartermaster General Department)

### Luftflotte 2 (Generalfeldmarschall Albert Kesselring)

<b>Jagdfliegerführer 2</b>	Stab/JG 3	Bf 109 E	<i>Major Günther Lützow</i>
	I./JG 3	Bf 109 E (minus one Schwarm)	<i>Hptm. Hans von Hahn<sup>1</sup></i>
	II./JG 3	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Erich von Selle</i>
	III./JG 3	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Wilhelm Balthasar</i>
	Stab/JG 26	Bf 109 E	<i>Major Adolf Galland</i>
	I./JG 26	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Rolf Pingel</i>
	II./JG 26	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Erich Bode</i>
	III./JG 26	Bf 109 E	<i>Major Gerhard Schöpfel</i>
	Stab/JG 27	Bf 109 E	<i>Major Bernhard Woldenga<sup>2</sup></i>
	II./JG 27	Bf 109 E (part)	<i>Hptm. Wolfgang Lippert</i>
	III./JG 27	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Max Dobislav</i>
	Stab/JG 51	Bf 109 E	<i>Obstlt. Werner Mölders</i>
	I./JG 51	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Hermann-Friedrich Joppien</i>
	II./JG 51	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Günther Matthes</i>
	III./JG 51	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Walter Oesau<sup>3</sup></i>
	IV./JG 51	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Johannes Janke</i>
	Stab/JG 52	Bf 109 E	<i>Major Hanns Trübenbach</i>
	I./JG 52	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Wolfgang Ewald</i>
	II./JG 52	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Erich Voitke</i>
	Stab/JG 53	Bf 109 E	<i>Major Günther Freiherr von Maltzahn</i>
	I./JG 53	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Hans-Karl Meyer</i>
	II./JG 53	Bf 109 E (minus 5.Staffel)	<i>Hptm. Heinz Bretnütz</i>
	III./JG 53	Bf 109 E	<i>Major Wolf Dietrich Wilcke</i>
	Stab/JG 54	Bf 109 E	<i>Major Hannes Trautloft</i>
	II./JG 54	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Dietrich Hrabak</i>
	II.(S)/LG 2	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Otto Weiss</i>
	Erprobungsgruppe 210	Bf 109 E & Bf 110	<i>Oblt. Johannes Pfeiffer (acting)</i>
<b>Luftgaukommando XI</b>	Stab/JG 1	Bf 109 E	<i>Obstlt. Carl Schumacher</i>
	I./JG 54	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Hubertus von Bonin</i>
<b>Luftgaukommando VI</b>	I./JG 3	Bf 109 E (one Schwarm only)	<i>Hptm. Hans von Hahn</i>
<b>Luftgaukommando Holland</b>	III./JG 54	Bf 109 E	<i>Oblt. Günther Scholz (acting)<sup>4</sup></i>

### Luftflotte 3 (Generalfeldmarschall Hugo Sperrle)

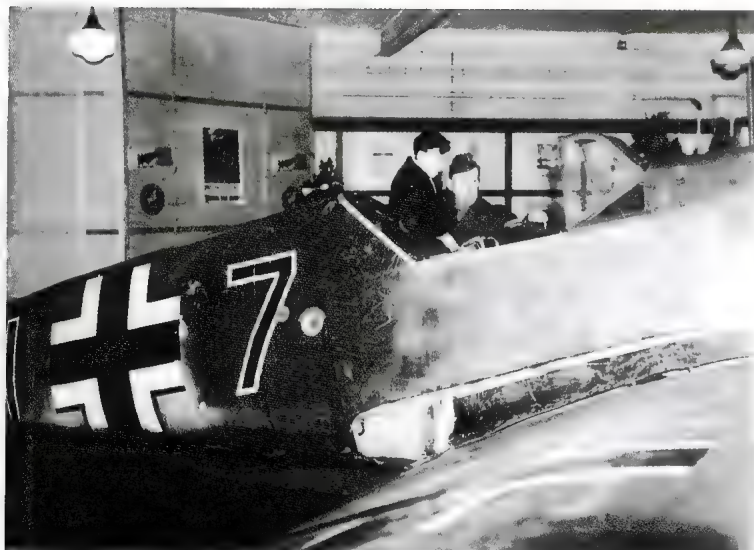
<b>Jagdfliegerführer 3</b>	<i>No aircraft</i>		
<b>IV.Fliegerkorps</b>	I./JG 27	Bf 109 E	<i>Major Eduard Neumann</i>
	II./JG 27	Bf 109 E (part)	<i>Hptm. Wolfgang Lippert</i>
<b>V.Fliegerkorps</b>	Stab/JG 2	Bf 109 E	<i>Major Helmut Wick</i>
	I./JG 2	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Karl-Heinz Krahl</i>
	II./JG 2	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Karl-Heinz Griesert</i>
	III./JG 2	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Hans "Assi" Hahn</i>
	5./JG 53	Bf 109 E (subordinate to Luftflotte 2)	

### Luftflotte 5 (General-Oberst Hans-Jürgen Stumpff)

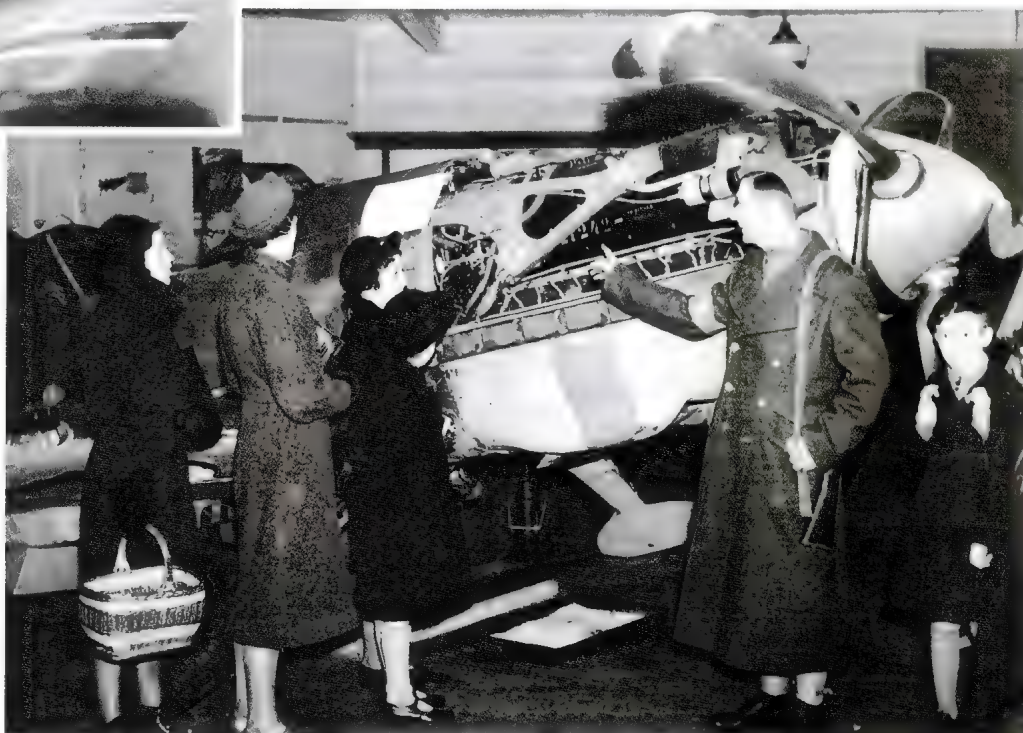
<b>X.Fliegerkorps</b>	II./JG 77	Bf 109 E	<i>Hptm. Karl Hentschel</i>
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1. Hans von Hahn (born on 7 Aug 1914 in Frankfurt) should not be confused with Hans "Assi" Hahn (born on 14 Apr 1914 in Gotha).  
 2. Woldenga was replaced by *Major* Wolfgang Schellmann on 3 November 1940.  
 3. Oesau took over III./JG 3 in November 1940, being replaced by *Hptm.* Richard Leppla.  
 4. *Hptm.* Arnold Lignitz took over command on 4 November 1940.





The Bf 109 E-4 flown by 26 year old Oblt. Walter Fiel of 8./JG 53 on 2 October when he was attacked by about 16 Spitfires, one of which slightly damaged his aircraft. Although there were very few .303 strikes in this machine, Fiel's radiator, petrol tank and probably the fuel lines were hit and Fiel crash-landed with his engine backfiring near Peckham, Kent. Oblt. Fiel, who had been awarded the EK I, had previously served with JG 3.

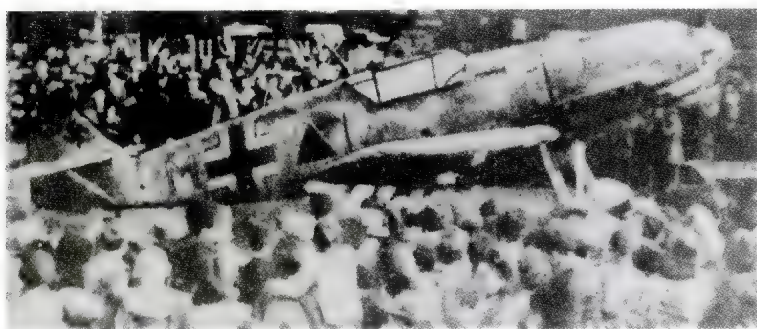


**Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-4 'Black 7' of 8./JG 53 flown by Oblt. Walter Fiel on the morning of 2 October**  
 Finished in a 70/71 upper scheme, the colours extended unevenly down the fuselage sides with some mottling applied beneath the cockpit canopy. Both upper and lower cowlings were yellow with a red ring approximately 1 foot in width around the centre. The '7', which was of a non-standard pattern, and the vertical Gruppe bar were black with a thin white outline. The rudder was also painted yellow and the Werk Nummer 5901 was clearly visible on the fin. The spinner was painted half red and half yellow with the backplate halved in black, or black-green, and white, and was also fitted with a yellow nose cap.



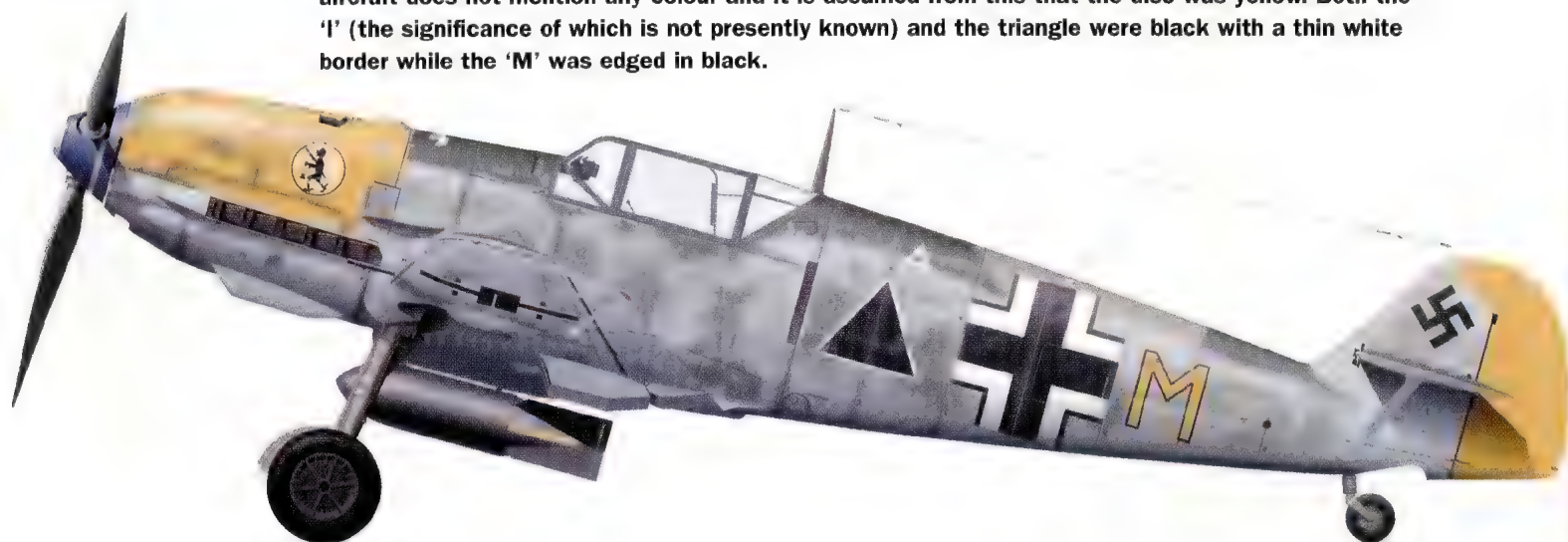


**RIGHT AND BELOW:** At 10.30 hrs on the morning of 5 October, this aircraft, W.Nr. 3726, piloted by Fw. Erhardt Pankratz of 6.(Schlacht)/LG 2, was flying near the English coast at a height of 12,000 feet together with four other aircraft from his unit, when he was attacked from out of the sun by 603 Sqn Spitfires. Both petrol tanks were hit and Pankratz attempted to return to France but his engine failed and he forced landed near Peasmarsh, Sussex. Fw. Pankratz, who had flown throughout the French campaign, had only returned to his unit about two weeks previously following a period of illness and, since returning to his unit, had made four other war flights. On examination, a steel helmet was found in this aircraft. Clearly visible in these photographs are the fuselage markings, including the black equilateral triangle of the Schlacht, or ground-attack, units. It should be noted, however, that the parent Gruppe, II.(Schlacht)/LG 2 was employed throughout the Battle of Britain in a strategic role, as opposed to its customary tactical ground-attack role.



6.(S)/LG 2 Emblem

**Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-4/B of 6.(Schlacht)/LG 2, flown by Fw. Erhardt Pankratz**  
Finished in an 02/71 upper scheme, a green 71 and dark grey mottle was applied randomly along the fuselage sides. The upper cowlings and rudder were painted yellow and the spinner was reported as being painted pale blue with a white tip and a thin white concentric band immediately aft of the propeller blades. The 6. Staffel cat with sword and lantern emblem was painted black and was carried on either side of the cowling on a black bordered yellow disc. Although most other works state that the background colour to this disc was pale blue, the relevant crash report on this aircraft does not mention any colour and it is assumed from this that the disc was yellow. Both the 'I' (the significance of which is not presently known) and the triangle were black with a thin white border while the 'M' was edged in black.





## “Our morale in combat was unbroken.”

HANS-EKKEHARD BOB, JG 54

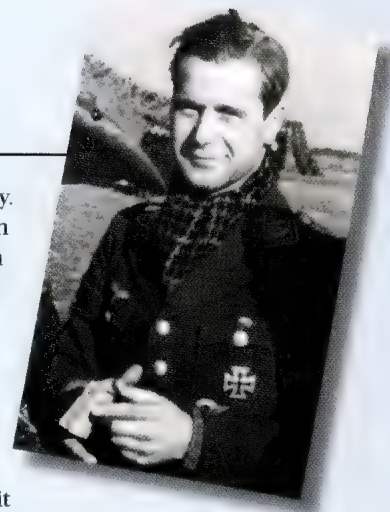
**O**ur morale in combat was unbroken and when the weather permitted, we flew many sorties each day. Comparatively speaking, the English were in the better position in that they fought over their own territory and thus could save themselves in an emergency by baling out or carrying out a crash landing. In contrast, if we found ourselves in such circumstances, we had to count on being captured or risk landing our damaged aircraft in the Channel.

In a dogfight during August 1940, my radiator was shot-up, causing the engine cooling system to fail and I had to turn off the ignition to prevent an engine fire. The Me 109<sup>1</sup> had a glide angle of 13:1<sup>2</sup>, which meant that with the engine stopped we could glide 13 kilometres for each kilometre of altitude. This occurred at an altitude of 4,000 metres over Canterbury, some 80 km from the French coast, so I knew I would never be able to glide that far and had to think of something new. From 4,000 metres I would be able to glide only 52 km at the most, then I would go down into the English Channel. Suddenly it occurred to me to allow the engine to cool during the descent. This I did and the temperature dropped quickly, so I restarted the engine and climbed at full throttle as high as possible until the engine overheated again. I did this repeatedly, climbing up and gliding down, until I finally reached the French coast and carried out an emergency landing on the beach at Calais. My report of this experience was distributed to the units and the method adopted. It later received the nickname ‘geboht’ after Bob, my surname.

Our missions over England continued, becoming progressively more difficult until, in the last part of 1940, attacks became impossible to carry out due to the severe weather conditions. The German fighter-pilots were still optimistic even though the daylight bomber operations had been cancelled. The British fighters did not even take off if there were no German bomber formations flying in the English skies. Thus we German fighters could fly around over southern England without contact with the enemy until we reached London. In order to lure the British fighters into the air, some of the Me 109 squadrons were equipped with bomb racks. This was the birth of the fighter-bomber.

As the *Staffelkapitän* of 9./JG 54, I had to carry out a test flight with a 250 kg bomb under the fuselage. The take-off, from a meadow at Guines-South, was quite risky since we fighter pilots had no idea how to handle bombs, how to hit the target, or how to operate the whole thing. In fact, the sortie was at first regarded as something suitable for a *Himmelfahrtskommando*, or suicide squad, but it proved worth the effort as the flight with the bomb was successful. Once in the air, I flew to a small spit of land extending from the English coast where I could release the bomb but exactly where it fell I could not determine as I really did not have the necessary experience. With time, however, and with improvisation - in order to dive at the correct angle, for example, we painted lines on the sides of the canopy - we achieved really good results. We then flew against England where our first targets were the airbase at Biggin Hill and Tilbury docks in London, where warships were being built.

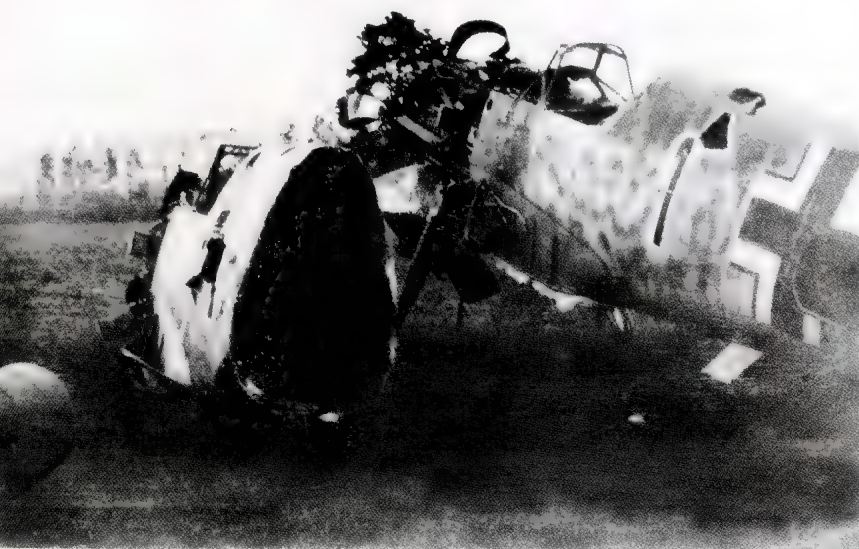
During all of our operations the radio communications traffic of the British fighter pilots were being intercepted. On one occasion<sup>3</sup>, an interesting conversation took place between ground control and a British fighter formation when ground control said: “Attack the German bomber formations!” The English formation leader shouted back: “There are no bomber formations here!” Ground control: “But bombs have been dropped!” Formation leader: “I see only Me 109s but they can’t drop bombs!” Word quickly got around, though, that the bombs were being dropped by the Me 109 units with the result that air combat was resumed.



1. German pilots of the period referred to the Messerschmitt 109 as the ‘Me 109’ instead of the technically correct ‘Bf 109’.

2. Rudolf Rothenfelder of JG 2 has stated that the ratio between height and the glide distance was 12:1.

3. Probably 20 September 1940. See main text for further details.



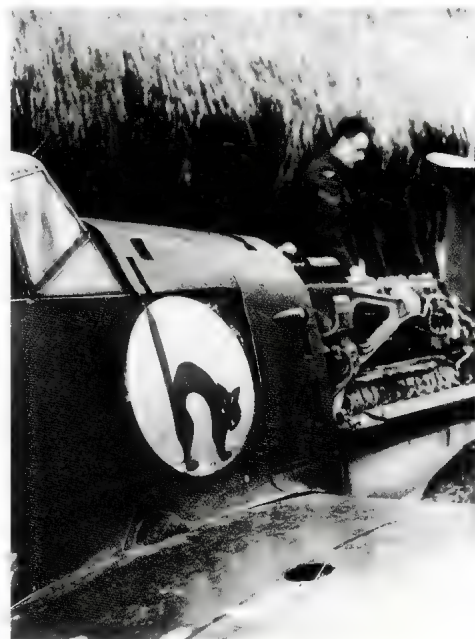
**RIGHT:** Oblt. Viktor Mölders, the *Staffelkapitän* of 2./JG 51, was the brother of the famous Major Werner Mölders, *Kommodore* of JG 51. He fought in the Polish campaign, had been in Norway and Holland, made twenty war flights against Great Britain and claimed seven victories. The 2. *Staffel* was the *Jabo Staffel* of JG 51 and, on 7 October, the unit was making a fighter-bomber attack with 250 kg bombs against the docks in London when it was attacked by RAF Hurricanes. Oblt. Mölders’ aircraft (**LEFT**) was hit from below by two long bursts fired by Sgt. Eric Wright of 605 Sqn. With smoke and glycol pouring from his aircraft, Mölders flew at rooftop height back towards the Channel but his engine overheated and he made a forced landing at Guestling in Sussex. The nose and tail of this machine (**LEFT**), a Bf 109 E-4/B, coded ‘Black 1’, were yellow.





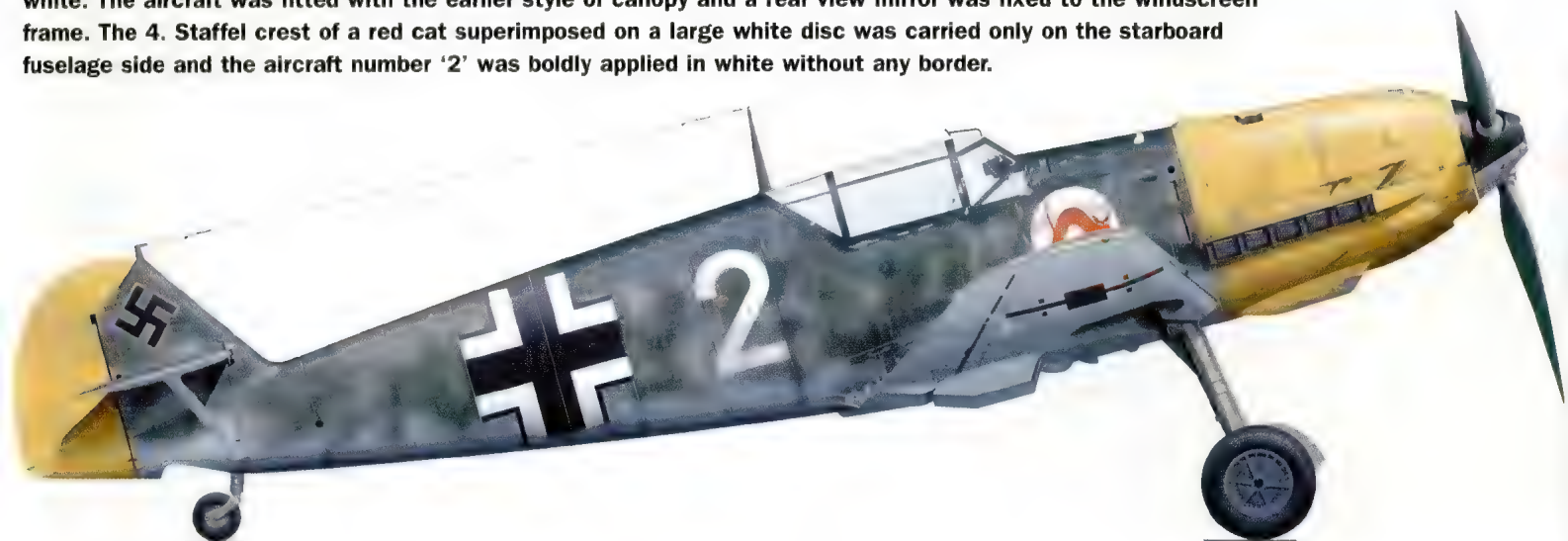


During a freie Jagd patrol on the morning of 8 October, 4./JG 52 was attacked from behind by Spitfires of 603 Sqn. This Bf 109 E-1, 'White 2' flown by Fw. Paul Boche, the Staffel's Technical NCO, fell victim to P/O R. Berry of 603 Sqn. Boche's aircraft was hit in the radiator and the engine overheated and failed. At 09.30 hrs Boche made a forced landing at Little Grange Farm, Hazeleigh near Maldon, Essex, during which the aircraft struck a haystack and broke its back.



#### **Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-1 of 4./JG 52 flown by Fw. Paul Boche**

Finished in a 70/71 upper finish, the fuselage sides and fin of this aircraft were heavily mottled in 02 and 71 with the 71 predominating. The engine cowling was yellow and the spinner was black-green with one quarter painted white. The aircraft was fitted with the earlier style of canopy and a rear view mirror was fixed to the windscreen frame. The 4. Staffel crest of a red cat superimposed on a large white disc was carried only on the starboard fuselage side and the aircraft number '2' was boldly applied in white without any border.



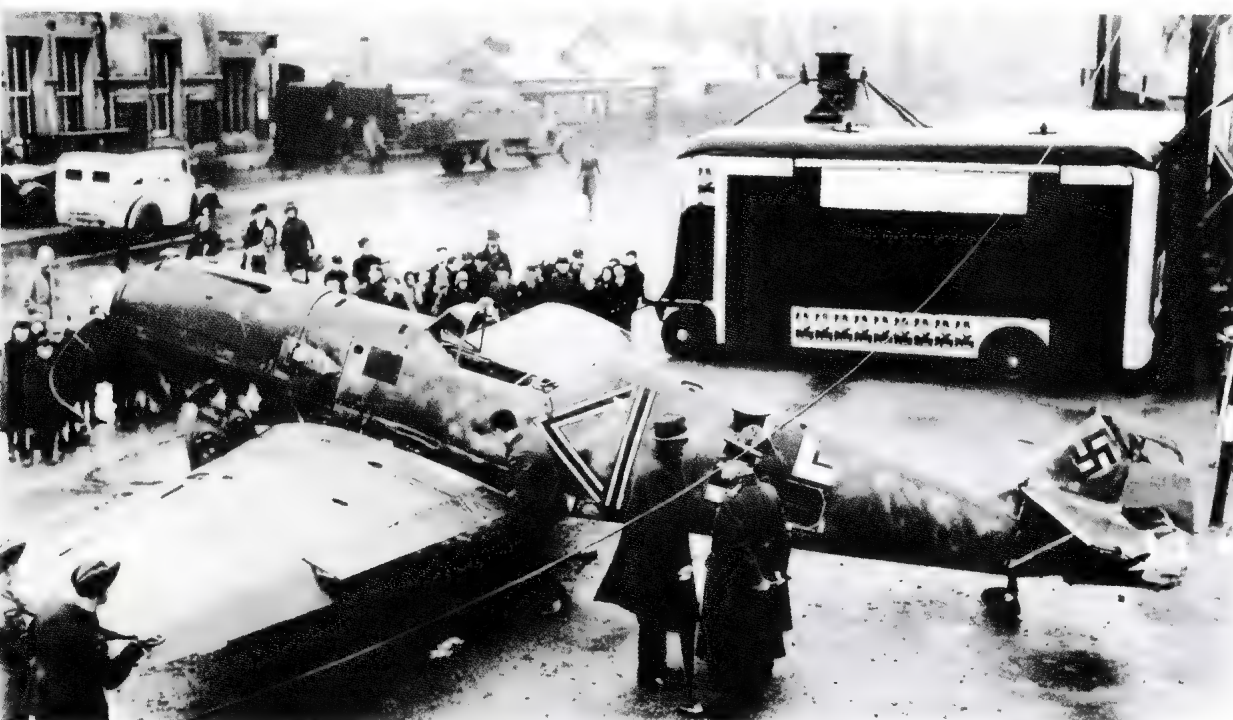




## Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-3 of Stab II./JG 54 flown by Lt. Bernhard Malischewski

Wearing a high demarcation 70/71 upper scheme, the fuselage sides carried a fairly densely applied crosshatch pattern of 71 over 02. The upper cowling and rudder were painted yellow with four white Abschussbalken applied near the top of the rudder. The spinner was halved in black-green and white with the tip in the Stab colour of green. The black and white chevron and vertical bar were of non-standard proportions and beneath the windscreen was a black painted rectangle which was stated by the pilot to be the unfinished 'Lion of Aspern' emblem of II./JG 54.

*RIGHT:* Stab II./JG 54 immediately before a mission. The machine on the far right flown by Lt. Bernhard Malischewski force landed in England on 12 October 1940 and comparison with the photograph below will show that the panel immediately ahead of the windscreen was later replaced or repainted.



*LEFT:* The Bf 109 E-3 flown on 12 October by Lt. Malischewski and which made a very good forced landing south of Tenterden, Kent. Although sometimes stated to have been shot down by Sqn. Ldr. R.S. Tuck of 257 Sqn., Lt. Malischewski said on interrogation that while there had been some fighting, he had not been shot down but had landed because of engine failure. The RAF's crash report tends to support this, stating that it was impossible to establish the cause of the forced landing from examination of the aircraft and that there was no sign of .303 strikes, damage from AA fire, or that the engine had overheated. Lt. Malischewski's aircraft is seen here on display in Lincoln.





In the early afternoon of 13 October 1940, some 50 to 60 Bf 109s, which included the whole of III./JG 3, took off to escort Jabos to London. The formation was flying at about 27,000 ft over London when it was attacked by the Spitfires of 92 Sqn. 'White 7', a Bf 109 E-4 flown by Gefr. Hubert Rungen of 7./JG 3, became slightly separated and went to attack two Spitfires. Meanwhile, a third Spitfire climbed from underneath and shot through Rungen's radiator. Chased by this third Spitfire, Rungen made for the coast but then considered his position hopeless and made a forced landing at Cuckold Coombe near Ashford. The aircraft was later exhibited at the Guildhall in London (*LEFT AND BELOW*).

**Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-4 of 7./JG 3 flown by Gefr. Hubert Rungen**

Finished in a high demarcation 02/71 upper pattern, the fuselage sides carried a mottle of both these colours applied in patches of varying size and density, beneath which the overpainted Stammkennzeichen 'BA+DY' was clearly visible. The '7' and vertical Gruppe bar were of thinner proportions than usual and thinly outlined in black. The upper cowlings and rudder were painted yellow and the spinner was black-green with a white tip. Although severely damaged, the aircraft was deemed suitable for display and subsequently appeared at various locations throughout Britain.







*LEFT AND BELOW:* Gefr. Runge's aircraft was also later exhibited in Hartlepool, Durham, in the north of England. The fuselage numeral and Gruppe bar were white, edged in black, beneath which the original Stammkennzeichen BA + DY showed through quite clearly.



*LEFT:* Lt. Hubert Mütterich's 'Black 10' of 2./JG 77 in early October 1940. By this time, Mütterich was credited with eight victories including a Bloch 152 and a Hurricane during the French campaign on May 1940. During the Battle, Mütterich claimed a Spitfire on 31 August, two more on 4 and 7 September, a Hurricane on the 14th and two Spitfires on the 27th.





**ABOVE:** Photographed before the Battle of Britain, a view of Franz Jänisch in the cockpit of his Bf 109 E-4, Nr. 1588 after his 100th war flight, this view showing his personalised Mickey Mouse emblem.

**BELOW:** On 15 October 1940, Fw. Horst Hellriegel of 3./JG 2 took off from Cherbourg in this Bf 109 E-4 as one of five aircraft on a free Jagd patrol. On the return flight, the aircraft were flying at 25,000 feet when Fw. Hellriegel's aircraft developed radiator trouble and he descended to 23,000 feet. Suddenly, about 20 RAF fighters arrived and in their first attack this aircraft received damage to the petrol tank and left wing. A further attack damaged nearly all the cockpit instruments and Hellriegel made a forced landing near Newport on the Isle of Wight. The pilot, who was captured unhurt, had previously served as a flying instructor in Berlin and had only arrived with 3./JG 2 two days previously. This was his first war flight and, as he had not yet been allocated his own aircraft, he borrowed 'Yellow 8', normally the machine flown by Fw. Franz Jänisch. Jänisch, who had flown this machine since the beginning of the French campaign, was not at all pleased that the new pilot had borrowed it and, as he lamented post-war, did not bring it back. When shot down, the machine had a yellow cowling and rudder but was otherwise as seen here. Note Jänisch's personal badge, a Mickey Mouse wearing boxing gloves, just visible below the rear cockpit in this photograph.



**ABOVE AND RIGHT:** A Luftwaffe after-action report on operations carried out on 15 October states that London and south-east England was attacked by "light units of Luftflotte 2", i.e. the Jabo units of JG 2, JG 26, JG 3, JG 51, JG 52, JG 54 and LG 2, all with fighter escort. During fighter action in these attacks, the Bf 109 E-7 flown by Lt. Ludwig Lenz of 3.(J)/LG 2 blew up in the air at comparatively low altitude, scattering wreckage over a wide area north of Elham, Kent. The cause of the explosion is uncertain, but an RAF report mentions that MG fire had been heard and, as the Bf 109s of 1.(J)/LG 2 were known to have been fitted with bombs, it was thought possible that the bomb beneath this aircraft had been struck by a bullet. Lt. Lenz did not survive this incident. His aircraft, W.Nr. 3734, had a yellow nose and carried a black chevron outlined in white. Two photographs showing this machine on 3 September, before its nose was painted yellow, appear in Volume Two, Page 180.





# September-October 1940

## Sealion cancelled

***"The enemy Air Force is by no means defeated. On the contrary, it shows increasing activity."***

*Entry in the German Naval War Diary, 17 September 1940.*

Unknown even to practically all his closest advisors, Hitler had some weeks earlier ruled out an invasion of Great Britain by force as unnecessary, although he allowed military preparations to continue in order to keep the British under pressure. Even by mid-September, he still hoped that bombing and the fear of invasion would force the British to the negotiating table. He had therefore avoided issuing any firm directive on when Sealion would be launched but on 17 September he postponed the operation indefinitely. Shortly afterwards, he was overheard to admit that the *Luftwaffe* was nowhere near achieving air superiority and by the end of the month it had become increasingly clear, even to the senior commanders, that Sealion was in fact unlikely to take place before the end of the year. With his generals anxiously demanding instructions on the forced invasion of Britain, Hitler could therefore procrastinate no longer and on 12 October, he issued the following directive (actually released by *Feldmarschall* Wilhelm Keitel) to senior OKW commanders:

*"The Führer has decided that from now until the spring, preparations for Sealion shall be continued solely for the purpose of maintaining political and military pressure on England. Should the invasion be reconsidered in the spring or early summer of 1941, orders for a renewal of operational readiness will be issued later. In the meantime military conditions for a later invasion are to be improved."*

Hitler, of course, had no intention of reconsidering an invasion of Britain in the spring or early summer of 1941. As early as July 1940 he had already decided to attack Russia and this certainly came higher on his list of priorities than any invasion of Britain.

Much has been made of Hitler's directive and it has often been cited as signalling the end of the Battle of Britain, but the aerial battles continued and the decision regarding *Seelöwe* had little immediate effect on the aircrew of either side. Indeed, from the British viewpoint, while the Germans' switch to night bombing succeeded in hampering production and distribution, it was hardly what they expected as a prelude to invasion and they had already assumed that it implied no military operations were likely to be launched in the near future.

The increasing use of escorted *Jabos* flying in at high speed, invariably taking advantage of the weather and frequently flying at altitudes exceeding 32,000 ft, where the Bf 109 performed better than either the Hurricane or the marks of Spitfire then in service, posed a real problem for Fighter Command. The *Luftwaffe's* objective was not only to inflict heavy losses on Fighter Command but also to keep it busy and off-balance without jeopardising the participating *Luftwaffe* units. By shifting targets, first attacking London, then switching to fighter airfields, then attacking both at the same time, pressure was maintained on Fighter Command. RAF pilots spent many wasted hours climbing and chasing the enemy fighters and experience showed there was a need to positively identify the composition of these incoming raid before committing fighters to intercept them. In cloudy or hazy conditions, the German formations were invisible to coastal Observer Corps posts and often many sighting reports left the defending fighters intercepting them with a height disadvantage. To overcome these problems, ACM Sir Hugh Dowding had authorised in September the formation of two 'Spotting Flights', Nos. 421 and 422. The pilots were to reconnoitre and shadow enemy formations and report them to 11 Group headquarters. Although the pilots had strict orders to avoid combat, this proved difficult, for although the Flights were equipped with Mk. II Spitfires and for a short time with Mk. II Hurricanes, both of which had a higher ceiling than earlier models, enemy fighters were frequently encountered high over the Dover Straits. In the first ten days of such patrols by 421 Flight, seven combats took place and four pilots were shot down. However, despite the hazards of the undertaking, the Flights proved their worth. Information received at 11 Group Headquarters was passed on to the controllers who, if informed that the enemy formations included fighter-bombers, then endeavoured to vector squadrons to intercept.

However, in order for the RAF to stand any chance of intercepting the *Jabos*, Spitfire squadrons still had to mount standing patrols. The Spitfire was the only aircraft able to climb from patrol height to 30,000 ft fast enough and, to save the pilots' oxygen supply for the interception part of their



mission, patrols were flown at an altitude which did not require the pilots to breathe oxygen. Although costly and ineffective with many missed interceptions, these patrols were the only way to deal with the high level, high-speed fighter-bomber raids. Nevertheless, the advantage in these circumstances was definitely with the German fighter pilots who were usually in a position to open combat by diving down on the British fighters.

On 8 October the *Luftwaffe's* attacks started early, London again being the main target for four *Jabo* attacks which began crossing the coast regularly between 08.30 and 13.00 hrs. Two of these attacks were flown at high altitude and, presumably because they were unable to reach the attackers in time, RAF fighters failed to intercept in any strength and the attackers were allowed to penetrate the defences virtually unmolested. Bombs were dropped on Charing Cross, government buildings, Tower Bridge and the BBC building. Fighter Command had responded to these attacks with 639 sorties, losing two aircraft and three pilots, one of whom was the top scoring Czech pilot Sgt. Josef Frantisek who was killed during a routine patrol.

*Jagd* losses on 8 October amounted to two fighters lost with both pilots captured, one of which was unusual in that it occurred without a shot being fired. During this period of the Battle, *Luftwaffe* fighter pilots were issued with a new type of dinghy. The previous type, a two-man dinghy, was found too bulky and altogether unsatisfactory, particularly for use in the already small cockpit of the single-seat Bf 109. The new dinghy was more compact and was worn on the pilot's back over the inflatable life jacket. On 8 October, Lt. Heinz Escherhaus of 1./JG 77, took off in his 'Yellow 10' on a *freie Jagd* patrol and was flying at 25,000 feet when he was suddenly attacked in the rear by his own rubber dinghy! Contrary to instructions, Lt. Escherhaus's batman had connected the gas flask to the dingy and it had accidentally inflated. The pilot was pushed forward onto the control column and, in an effort to get things right within the rapidly diminishing confines of his cockpit, he lost control and went into a very steep spiral dive. Now, owing to his uncomfortable position, Escherhaus was unable to alter the propeller setting and the aircraft over-revved. The boost blow-out valve went off and then, when the pilot was eventually able to regain control, he found that the engine would not respond to the throttle. Finally, on pulling out, the engine stalled and he had to make a forced landing, coming down at Eastry in Kent. RAF Intelligence was greatly amused by Lt. Escherhaus's aerial combat with his dinghy, and his misfortune was recorded in three separate interrogation reports. Surprisingly, perhaps, in view of his bizarre experience, his morale was said to be high.

Heavy rain squalls provided ideal condition on 9 October for small formations of *Jabos* to evade the defences and three major attacks were mounted which primarily targeted London and the airfields of 11 Group. The next day, the main effort was again carried out by *Luftflotte 2's* *Jabo* force, 17 Bf 109s from the *Jabostaffeln* of I., II. and III./JG 3 releasing bombs through cloud over London while JG 54 attacked AA positions near Dover. At the same time, II.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 flew two missions each with 12 Bf 109s against Ashford. On 15 October, *Jafü 2* maintained pressure on Fighter Command and *Jabos* from JG 2, JG 3, JG 26, JG 51, JG 52 and JG 54, as well as II.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 again carried out missions with fighter escort to London. All units flew a total of two missions during the day and made several well-executed attacks on London which resulted in a serious disruption of the capital's rail services.

After 20th October, with the exception of only a few medium bomber raids carried out under cover of bad weather, fighter-bombers were used almost exclusively in daylight attacks on London and on the 25th the daytime weather situation permitted the most intensive series of *Jabo* operations yet mounted against the city. All day Bf 109 formations of up to *Gruppe* strength from JG 27, JG 51, JG 53, JG 54 and II.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 each flew three missions against the overall city area of London and were escorted by usually twice as many fighter aircraft. In the late afternoon, JG 27 mounted its fourth mission of the day when 13 Bf 109 aircraft attacked a convoy of 35 ships near Ramsgate and claimed one merchant vessel sunk with a direct hit amidships. In one of their now rare appearances in daylight, twin-engined medium bombers attacked a total of 16 RAF stations, being joined by Bf 109s which bombed Martlesham and Hawkinge. By the end of the day, the fighter force had flown 18 *Jabo* escort missions during which a total of 567 sorties were recorded.

Meanwhile, the *Luftwaffe's* bombing policy continued to centre on the progressive destruction of London, chiefly by night attack. Also, but with a much lower order of importance, efforts were made to interfere with production in the great arms centres of the Midlands, again chiefly by night. One occurrence of interest during the night operations of 25/26 October was the appearance of 16 Belgian-based Fiat BR 20 bombers of the *Regia Aeronautica* (Italian Air Force) which, operating under *Luftflotte 2*, carried out an inconsequential attack against Harwich. Unfortunately, while it made stirring



# September-October 1940

headlines in Rome, the raid was said to have made little impression on either their German allies or the British. As far as the latter were concerned, the Italian airmen were often the butt of jokes by music hall comedians of the period, but as will be seen later, in spite of their antiquated aircraft, when the need arose they were the equal of their counterparts in the *Luftwaffe* and RAF.

With the advantage of cloudy weather on 27 October, formations of *Jabos* and fighters, often accompanied by small numbers of twin-engined bombers, continued their familiar pattern of attacks over southern England. Throughout the day widespread sorties were flown in the Portsmouth and London areas and a number of nuisance raids were carried out against RAF airfields. It is perhaps a measure of the strain and intensity of the day's activity that, compared to the 974 sorties flown on 15 August, the RAF accumulated a total of 1,007 daylight sorties but destroyed just seven Bf 109s with six of the pilots taken prisoner and one killed.

On 29 October, *Luftflotte 2* launched an operation under the code word '*Opernhall*' (Opera Hall). Seventy-one Ju 88s escorted by 31 Bf 109s, and 52 bomb-carrying Bf 109s with an escort of 99 Bf 109 and Bf 110 aircraft carried out attacks on a number of airfields. Since the attacks were mostly carried out at low level, it was possible for the pilots to observe their hits and the *Luftwaffe Generalstab* considered the reported results 'very satisfactory'. Numerous hangars, billets, aircraft parking areas and fuel depots were destroyed by direct hits and while a total of 27 multi-engined aircraft were reported as being definitely destroyed on the ground, it was thought probable that a greater number was damaged. In the afternoon, 123 *Jabos* and 75 bombers, escorted by strong fighter forces successfully conducted further low-altitude attacks against 15 airfields between London and north of the Wash. As well as damage caused by conventional high-explosive bombs, a feature of the attacks on this day was the first use of the SD 2 anti-personnel bomb. Although this 2 kg weapon could be fused to explode on or before impact, large numbers of those dropped on airfields on 29 October were fitted with highly sensitive anti-disturbance fuses. Once armed, these fuses made the weapon impossible to move and the only means of disposal was by controlled demolition. On the airfield at RAF Wattisham in particular, the aerodrome was put out of action for three days while a thorough search was made for these deadly devices. Two armourers were killed and an armament officer injured during bomb clearance and in subsequent attacks on the airfield, a number of aircraft were destroyed, 12 people were killed and 27 injured. On 2 November, the situation was deemed serious enough to warrant ordering all non-essential personnel to disperse on foot into the surrounding countryside for a fixed period each morning and again in the evening when the enemy was most likely to attack.

One of the pilots taking part in the operations conducted on the 29th was *Obt.* Otto Hintze, acting *Gruppenkommandeur* of *Erprobungsgruppe* 210 and *Staffelkapitän* of the 3. *Staffel*. In the afternoon, Hintze lifted his Bf 109 coded 'Red 6' off from Calais-Marck airfield on his 53rd war flight, he and his *Staffel* comprising a formation ordered to carry out a diversionary attack on the dock area of London. At briefing, no exact target was given, but the general impression was that if they could not hit the docks then they were to release their bombs anywhere in the neighbourhood. All went well until, on the return flight, they were intercepted by Spitfires and one attacked Hintze's aircraft from the rear. The first attack damaged the cooling system and Hintze's aircraft started to emit a trail of white smoke. His Bf 109 was then seen diving by Spitfire pilot Sgt. J.H.B. Burgess of 222 Squadron. As Burgess gave chase, he saw the first Spitfire break off its attack and the Bf 109 flatten out and reduce its speed. In the Bf 109, Hintze was already considering abandoning his crippled aircraft when Sgt. Burgess opened fire on him from behind. Firing all the while, Burgess closed in from 300 to 50 yards range giving the Bf 109 a full seven seconds burst which caused a huge flash in the Messerschmitt's engine. Hintze now lost no time in abandoning his aircraft and, as Burgess broke away, he saw the Messerschmitt's canopy lift off and Hintze bale out. Although he struck the tailplane and injured his shoulder, Hintze landed safely by parachute west of Ashford where he was taken prisoner. He was awarded the Knight's Cross *in absentia* on 24 November 1940.

At North Weald, II.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 carried out a skillful diving attack just as the Hurricanes of 249 and 257 Squadrons were taking off. One Hurricane from 249 Sqn. was damaged, one from 257 Sqn. completely destroyed when it was hit by a bomb and caught fire, and another from 257 Sqn. so badly damaged by bombs while taking off that its pilot climbed to 3,000 feet and baled out. II.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2 lost three aircraft shot down in air combat during this mission, including the *Staffelkapitän* of 5.(*Schlacht*)/LG 2, *Obt.* Benno von Schenk, whose Bf 109 E-4 plunged into the sea off the Blackwater Estuary, and *Ofw.* Joseph Harmeling. Harmeling was returning from the attack on North Weald when he was attacked at 3,000 ft by two Hurricanes believed to have been from 249



Sqn. The first attack damaged his radiator and caused the engine to start overheating and, as the controls were also damaged, he was unable to manoeuvre to defend himself. He tried to fly on but the engine temperature increased to such an extent that it started to seize and Harmeling was obliged to make a forced landing at Wick, in Essex.

In contrast to the activity of 29 September, the 30th and 31st were somewhat anti-climactic. Two sweeps were mounted over south-eastern England on 30 October with bombs being dropped in areas of Kent and the south-eastern suburbs of London but without causing any significant damage. During the course of the afternoon, *Jabos* navigating by dead-reckoning carried out four operations to bomb London. The *Jagdwaaffe* lost four fighters during these operations with two pilots captured, one killed and one rescued by the *Seenotdienst*. With widespread rain and low cloud on the 31st, normal fighter-bomber and fighter sweeps were carried out and various airfields bombed but the scale of activity was greatly reduced and there were no fighter losses on either side.

Thus with the conclusion of daylight operations on 31st October, so ended the period of 114 turbulent days which is officially recognised in Britain as the duration of the Battle of Britain and, moreover, a battle won. However, neither side was defeated in any conventional sense and in Germany the period is viewed differently. Many former *Luftwaffe* personnel maintain that, with the air battle of Britain centring mainly on the relatively small area of London and the south-east, the so-called Battle of Britain was by no means as decisive as Britain proclaimed. Nor do former *Luftwaffe* personnel necessarily agree that the German Air Force was defeated, stating that *Luftwaffe* activity over Britain naturally declined due to the worsening weather and, later, the opening of other theatres of operations. Certainly operations over England were not discontinued because they were recognised as hopeless or because they could no longer be justified in terms of the losses incurred, and there was still much activity to come before the year was out.



ABOVE: After scoring eight victories in Spain and serving as *Staffelkapitän* of I./JG 53, Hptm Hans-Karl Meyer became *Gruppenkommandeur* of I./JG 53 in September 1940. On 17 October, at which time he had achieved at least thirty victories, he went missing during a routine flight over the Channel. Ten days later, British authorities examining a body washed ashore at Littlestone in Kent identified it as Meyer.

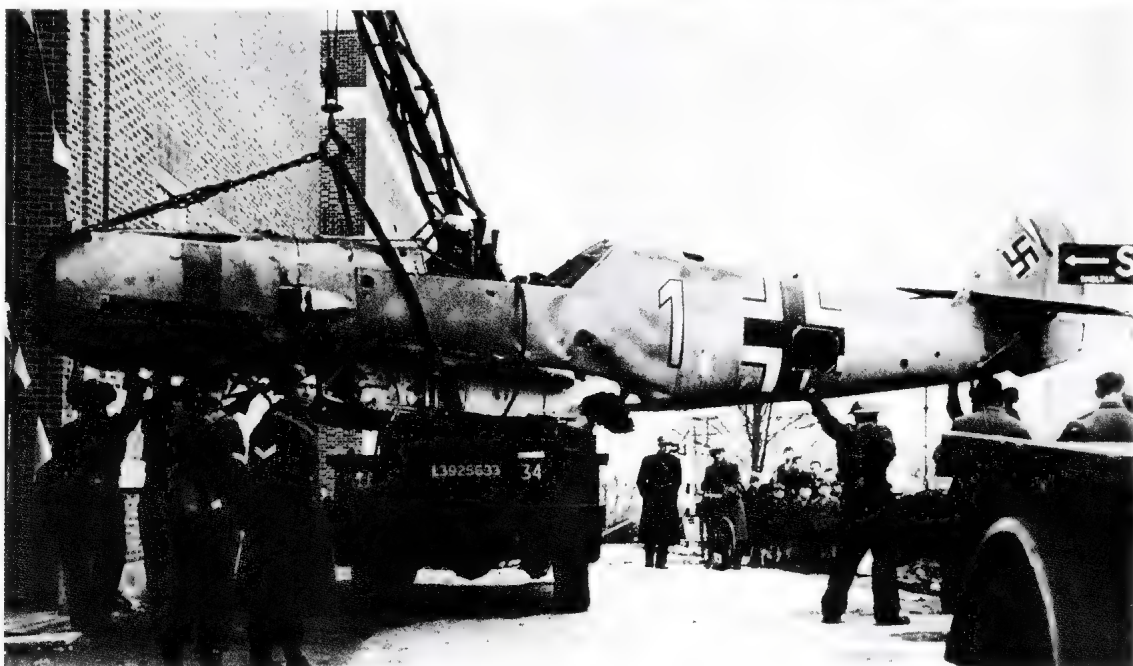
LEFT: On 16 September, Oblt. Hermann-Friedrich Joppien of JG 51 was awarded the *Ritterkreuz* after 21 victories. On 17 October 1940 he became *Kommandeur* of I./JG 51 and, during the Battle of Britain, shot down 25 British aircraft. Joppien was later awarded the Oak Leaves (23 April 1941) but, on 25 August 1941 was killed in Russia. His final score was 70 aircraft shot down, 42 of them in the West.



RIGHT: A *Schwarm* of Bf 109 E's prepares to take off for a mission against England, October 1940. The pilot of 'White 1' is believed to have been Oblt. Josef Fözö, the *Staffelkapitän* of 4./JG 51.



At 15.15 hrs on 17 October, Oblt. Walter Rupp, the Staffelkapitän of 3./JG 53, took off on a freie Jagd patrol. This was Oblt. Rupp's first operation for some time as an earlier crash had put him in hospital for four months and he had only recently rejoined his unit. About 40 aircraft were taking part in this operation and they were flying at between 22,000 and 24,000 feet when they were attacked by British fighters and the formation was split up, Oblt. Rupp and six other aircraft being left by themselves in a small group. Off Gravesend, Rupp's aircraft, 'Yellow 1', was then attacked from above by a Spitfire of 74 Sqn. which hit the radiator. Hoping to return home, Rupp turned out to sea but his engine rapidly overheated and, turning towards land again, he jettisoned his canopy and made a forced landing with his undercarriage retracted on Manston aerodrome. Just before landing, perhaps fearing that any additional injuries would prevent him from safely escaping from his aircraft, Rupp opened fire with his machine-guns, but apparently only to attract the attention of the aerodrome's ground personnel so that they could help free him if necessary. In the event however, he made a fair landing and was taken prisoner unhurt. His aircraft, a Bf 109 E-3/B, was fitted with a rack for one 250 kg bomb and was later exhibited (*BELOW*) inside the Civic Centre building in Tunbridge Wells.



## **Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-3/B of 3./JG 53 flown by Oblt. Walter Rupp**

Finished in a high demarcation 70/71 upper scheme, 02 had been applied in a horizontal band along the fuselage beneath the upper colours, extending down the fuselage sides to the level of the cockpit sill. No mottling appears to have been applied to the rear fuselage but the paintwork beneath the canopy was patchy and stained. The '1' was yellow with a thin black border and while the spinner was also yellow, the yellow paint applied to the cowlings and rudder had a much more orange appearance. As with other JG 53 aircraft it carried the red ring around the cowling but the Hakenkreuz on the fin had not been overpainted. Two white Abschussbalken were carried on the fin forward of the Hakenkreuz.





# September-October 1940



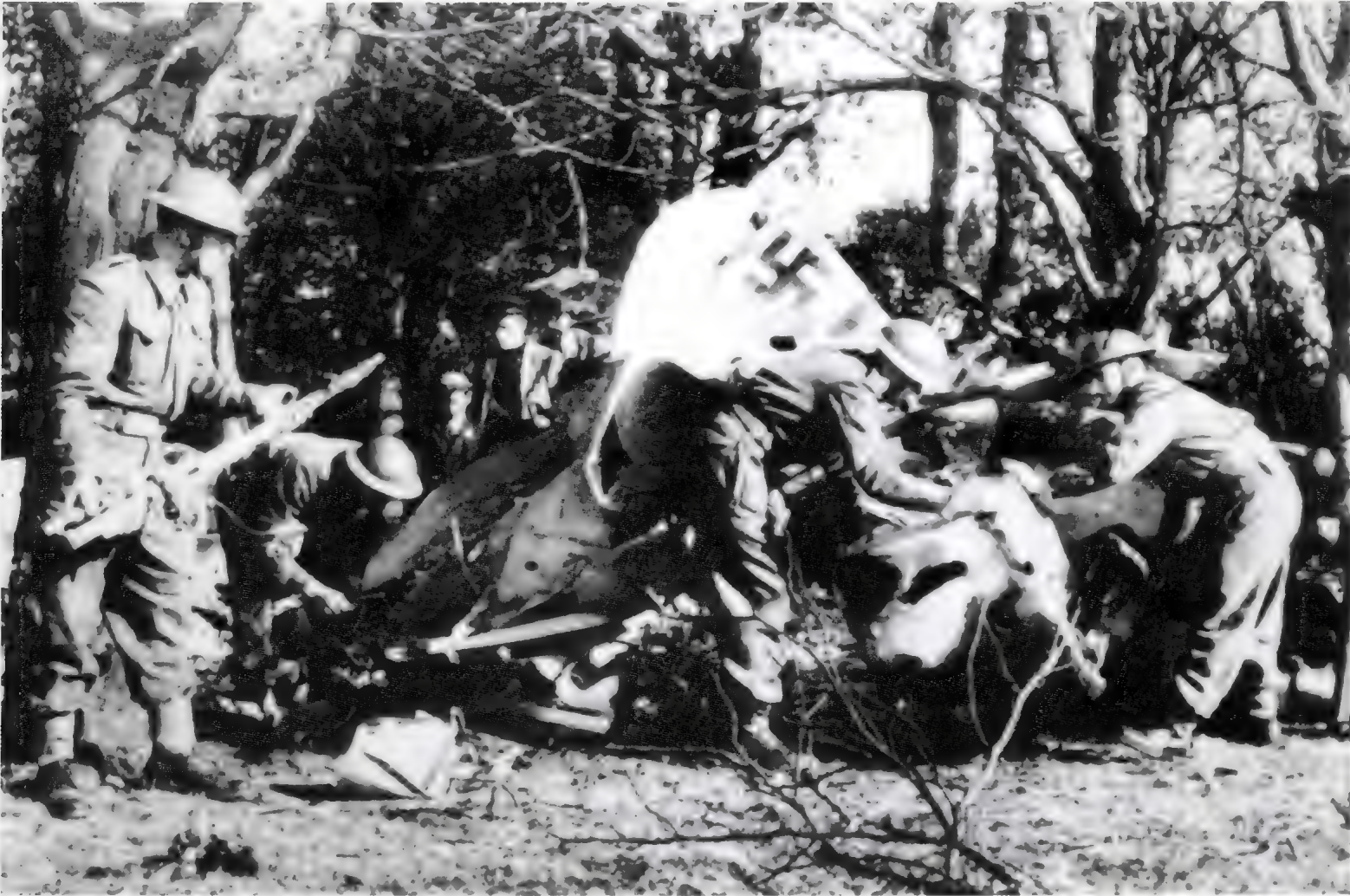
ABOVE: A Bf 109 E-4 of I./JG 26 at Marquise in October 1940 showing the fuselage sides darkened with a particularly untidy green overspray.

BELOW: Although wounded on 15 August, 1940 Hptm. Hans-Heinrich Brustellin retained command of I./JG 51 until 17 October. On the 18th, however, Brustellin (left) relinquished command of the Gruppe to 28 years old Oblt. Hermann-Freidrich Joppien (right), who had been awarded the Ritterkreuz two days previously with 21 victories.



ABOVE: Officers of I./JG 51 at the ceremony in which Hptm. Brustellin (fifth right) was succeeded as Kommandeur by Hptm. Joppien (first right). Also seen in this photograph (fifth left), is Oblt. Richard Leppla who claimed eight victories during the Battle of Britain and on 11 November became Kommandeur of III./JG 51.





ABOVE: The remains of Fw. Ludwig Bielmaier's Bf 109 E-7 of 5./JG 52 which was shot down on 20 October while escorting about fifty Bf 109 Jabos to London. Fw. Bielmaier was flying as Rottenhund to Lt. Günther Witt when they were attacked by ten Spitfires which dived from above and behind. Hit in the radiator, Bielmaier dived, then climbed in an attempt to get onto his attacker's tail. However, this manoeuvre failed and the Spitfire attacked him again, hitting the engine. Bielmaier baled out at 4,000 ft and was captured unwounded. His aircraft, coded '4' and carrying the Staffel's red devil with bow and arrow emblem, crashed into Mereworth Wood near West Malling in Kent and was completely wrecked.



LEFT AND ABOVE: Two pilots of 8./JG 54 at Guines, shortly before the Staffel moved to Holland on 21 October 1940. Note the 'Piepmatz' Staffel emblem.



# September-October 1940

**RIGHT:** Hptm. Heinz Bretnütz, Kommandeur of II./JG 53, was awarded the Ritterkreuz on 22 October after 20 air victories. In this photograph, one of a series taken by a PK photographer, Bretnütz wears an inflatable yellow life jacket and yellow cap over his flying helmet. This latter item was fashioned from a triangular piece of yellow cloth especially provided for that purpose and was intended to make pilots more conspicuous to rescuers should they land in the Channel. Other aids included packets of a bright green-yellow dye which stained a large area of water around a ditched pilot, and a one-man inflatable dinghy which was worn on the pilot's back over the life jacket.



**LEFT:** 'Yellow 9' of Oblt. Hans Ekkehard Bob's 9./JG 54. On 21 October, the entire III./JG 54 moved from Guines to Holland where it was based on airfields at Schiphol, Katwijk, Haamstede and de Kooi. Between 4 December and 15 January, the Gruppe was recalled to Germany to rest and refit

**RIGHT:** Major Hannes Trautloft (right) the Kommodore of JG 54 after an operation over England at the end of October. On the left is Hptm. Dietrich Hrabak, since 25 August the Kommandeur of II./JG 54, wearing the Ritterkreuz he was awarded on 21 October.





**RIGHT AND BELOW:** 'Black 7', the Bf 109 E-4 of Oblt. Joachim Schypek of JG 54 after forced landing at Broom Hill near Lydd during the morning of 25 October. According to the report on his interrogation, Oblt. Schypek was with the unit medical officer that morning who told him he was not to fly. Nevertheless, when the rest of his Staffel started engines and set off on a Jabo escort mission to London, Schypek could not resist and, running out to his aircraft, he took off after them. A large number of Bf 109s were on this operation but before the bombers reached their objective, Schypek, flying near Biggin Hill at 26,000 ft, was attacked by about ten 41 Sqn. Spitfires. Schypek successfully avoided several simultaneous attacks from both sides but did not see until too late that F/O Peter Brown was on his tail. 'Black 7' received many hits which damaged the radiator and Schypek could also hear bullets striking his armour plating. The Spitfire did not make another attack but, owing to the rising engine temperature, Schypek was forced to land.



## **Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-4 of 6./JG 54 flown by Oblt. Joachim Schypek**

Finished in a high demarcation 02/71 scheme, the fuselage sides carried a crosshatched pattern of green 71, between the arms of which were applied patches of 02 in varying densities. On the rudder, only the rear edge was painted yellow, and the uppersurface camouflage remained on the otherwise all-yellow cowling. Four black Abschußbalken were painted on the rudder and represented one Curtiss over France, two Spitfires over England and a Blenheim over France. The spinner carried a red tip with the remainder painted half-white and half black-green. The black '7' was thinly outlined in white and beneath the windscreen was a black rectangle, the beginnings of II./JG 54's 'Lion of Aspern' emblem.





# September-October 1940

**THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE TOP:** On 25 October, Gefr. Karl Raisinger of 3./JG 77 was flying this Bf 109 'Red 13' on a mission to London escorting Bf 109 Jabos of 1. and 2. Staffel. Approaching the target area, a great number of Spitfires and Hurricanes were observed apparently awaiting the German formation. However, the bombs were dropped and the whole formation was on the return journey at 17,000 ft when the British fighters attacked. Raisinger dived towards the Channel, not realising his aircraft had been hit in the engine and radiator. Soon the cockpit filled with smoke and Raisinger was low over the Channel when his engine stopped. He turned back and crash-landed at Harvey's Cross, North Saltdean, near Brighton.





On interrogation, Raisinger said he thought he had been hit by a cannon shell - note the large hole in the cowling, (*OPPOSITE MIDDLE AND BOTTOM*) but this was more likely to have been the result of a fire, the Crashed Enemy Aircraft Report stating that the starboard side of the engine cowling was burnt out level with the sparking plugs. The aircraft showed signs of previous ownership. A row of flags under the cockpit had been painted out leaving only the Danish flag partly visible on the port side and the victory bars on the tail recorded the success of the previous pilot.



## Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-3 of 3./JG 77 flown by Gefr. Karl Raisinger

Gefreiter Karl Raisinger forced landed his Bf 109 E-3, 'Red 13', north of Saltdean near Brighton on 25 October after it was damaged in combat with RAF fighters. The aircraft was camouflaged in a high demarcation 02/71 finish with light 02 mottling on the fuselage and fin. The upper and lower cowling, spinner and rudder were painted yellow and the '13' was a dull brownish red thinly outlined in black. Beneath the windscreen there were signs of wear or repainting and some of the paint of the starboard Balkenkreuz appeared to have flaked off revealing the 02 primer coat beneath. A small Danish flag was painted beneath the bottom rear corner of the canopy and four black Abschussbalken were applied unevenly on the fin either side of the Hakenkreuz. Although not visible in any of the photographs, RAF reports state that the name 'ROCHO' was painted on the port side of the cowling in red.



*RIGHT:* Gefr. Raisinger's 'Red 13' on display in Rootes' car showroom in Maidstone, Kent.



**RIGHT AND BELOW:** Scenes at 2./JG 3's dispersal at Colombert in late October as aircraft start their engines for the next mission. Engine cowlings are yellow and spinner caps and fairings over the tailwheel openings have recently been fitted. The last two letters 'LH' of the Stammkennzeichen are visible on the rear fuselage of 'Black 9' and, on the aircraft shown below, the entire fin, rudder and a section of the rear fuselage has been painted yellow.



**BELOW:** A Staffel of Bf 109s from Hptm. Günther Lützow's JG 3 with 'Yellow 9' parked closest to the camera. All aircraft have yellow noses and tails and the Tatzelwurm emblem appears on a masked-off background of the original camouflage finish.



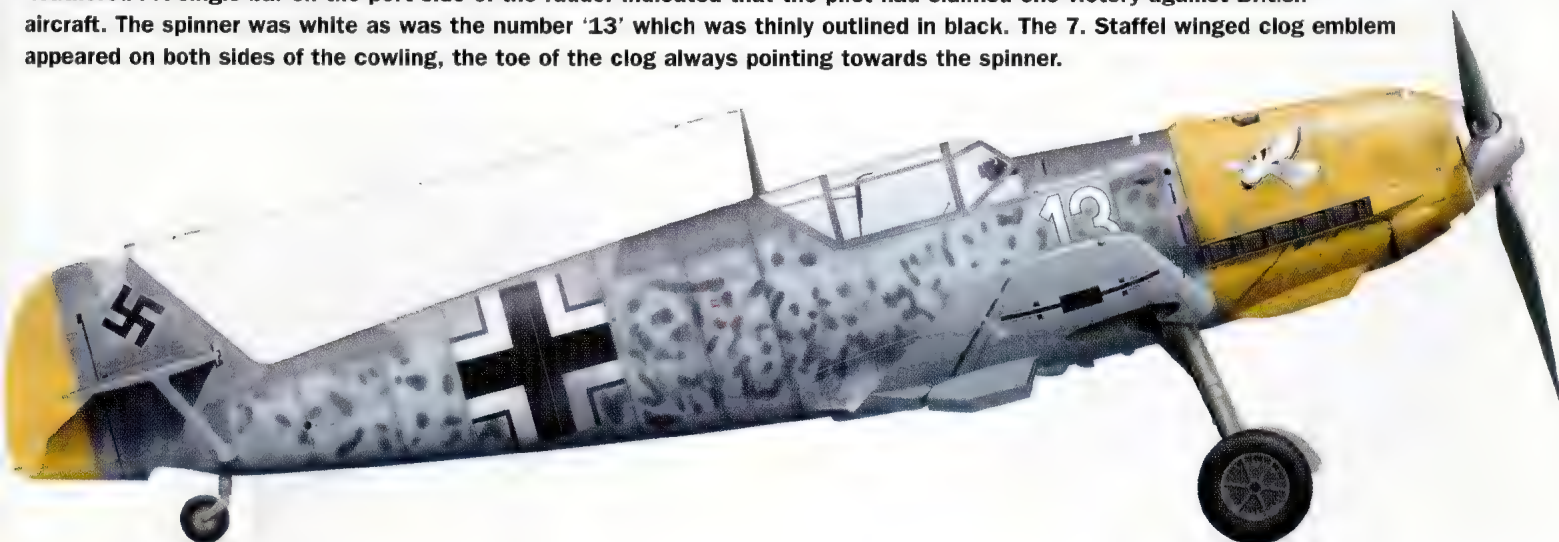


*BELOW AND RIGHT:* Uffz. Arno Zimmermann of 7./JG 54 took off from Guines with the whole of III. Gruppe at 08.35 hrs on 27 October on a fighter sweep over London. On the return flight, the Hurricanes of 605 Sqn. were seen below and some of the Bf 109s dived down to attack. As Uffz. Zimmermann was climbing again, a Hurricane, believed to have been flown by Sgt. Eric Wright (who had shot down Viktor Mölders on 7 October), fastened onto Zimmermann's tail and fired a burst which hit his engine and wounded the pilot. Despite a cockpit filled with smoke and a badly faltering engine, Zimmermann made for the coast but was obliged to make a forced landing on the beach near Lydd. The winged clog emblem of 7./JG 54 was inspired by the time the III. Gruppe spent in Holland refitting after the French campaign.



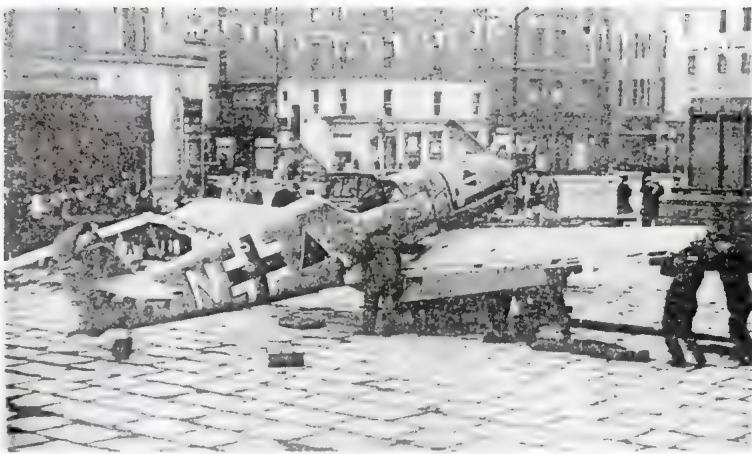
## **Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-1 'White 13' flown by Uffz. Arno Zimmermann of 7./JG 54 on 27 October 1940**

Displaying yet another variation of the locally mixed greys applied to Bf 109s during the late summer of 1940, it carried a fuselage mottle similar in style to that seen on aircraft of JG 2 albeit not as densely applied. The cowling and rudder were painted yellow but the yellow on the rudder was only applied to the rear three-quarters with the front edge appearing 'feathered'. A single bar on the port side of the rudder indicated that the pilot had claimed one victory against British aircraft. The spinner was white as was the number '13' which was thinly outlined in black. The 7. Staffel winged clog emblem appeared on both sides of the cowling, the toe of the clog always pointing towards the spinner.





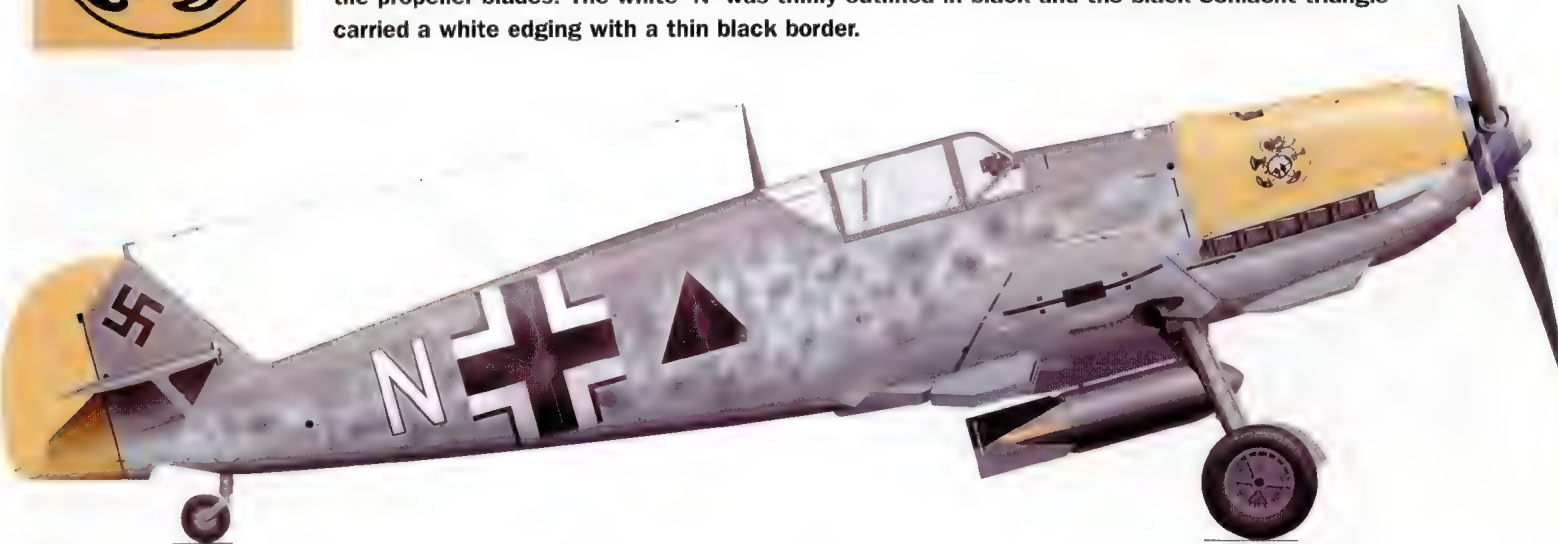
# September-October 1940



Various views of 'White N', the Bf 109E-4/B flown by Ofw. Josef Harmeling of 4.(Schlacht)/LG 2. On 29 October, Luftflotte 2 mounted an operation under the codeword 'Opernhall', during which Ofw. Harmeling carried out a Jabo attack at very low level against North Weald aerodrome. Climbing immediately afterwards, he descended to 3,000 feet to cross the coast on the return flight but was then attacked by two Hurricanes. The first attack damaged his radiator so that the engine started overheating, and also damaged his controls so that he was unable to defend himself. He tried to fly on but his engine temperature rose and then the engine started to seize up, obliging him to make a forced landing at Langenhoe, Essex. After examination by the RAF, the machine was placed on display in Scotland in early 1941 and is seen here (ABOVE LEFT) dismantled but otherwise fairly intact. However, as the photographs of the aircraft in Dundee (TOP RIGHT) and in a sunny street in Glasgow (RIGHT) illustrate, the condition of the aircraft gradually deteriorated.



**Messerschmitt Bf 109E-4/B of 4.(Schlacht)/LG 2 flown by Ofw. Josef Harmeling**  
Finished in an upper pattern of 02 and a locally mixed grey, the sides of the fuselage carried a fairly dense mottle in both of these colours. The cowling and rudder were yellow with the black and white Mickey Mouse Staffel emblem carried on each side of the cowling within a thin black circle. The spinner was painted light blue with a white tip and a thin white concentric band aft of the propeller blades. The white 'N' was thinly outlined in black and the black Schlacht triangle carried a white edging with a thin black border.





## Interrogated by the British

KONRAD JÄCKEL, 8./JG 26

Most of the sorties flown by the *Staffel* against England were as escort for the bomber formations which flew a defined course to the target. There was always one *Gruppe* of fighters flying close escort and one *Gruppe* further away, the positions of which were rotated. The bombs were dropped and then the 'Tommies' arrived. The Flak also fired and reached up to 5000 metres so that we had to fly through the barrage.

My second kill was on 18 August 1940 and this occurred after my *Staffelkapitän*, Oblt. Gustav 'Micky' Sprick, had destroyed one himself. A Spitfire came from the opposite side intent on attacking him but I intercepted it, shot it down, and the pilot baled out. My third and last kill before I was myself shot down was a Hurricane on 31 August 1940.

Sometimes the British would fly in a defensive circle which was difficult for us to penetrate and they knew, too, that we could not stay long over England.

When we were at Cape Gris-Nez, we received two visits from Göring who came to inspect us. Whenever he came it made us feel very proud. On one occasion it was a clear day and we could see right across the Channel to the cliffs of Dover.

Two of my close friends were *Ofw.* Gerhard Grzymalla and *Ofw.* Josef Gärtner. Grzymalla was shot down on the morning of 23 September and Gärtner on the 25th. I would see both of them again in the PoW camp.

On 29 October 1940, I was flying as Sprick's wingman in a replacement aircraft as my own aircraft had been hit a few days previously and I had had to carry out a landing on the French coast. We were flying home and had to fly a detour around some clouds. It was then that I saw a Spitfire below us and I dived down after him, thus leaving the *Staffel*. All of a sudden the Spitfire was gone. I climbed for altitude in the direction of the *Staffel* which I also could no longer see. Then I noticed an aircraft above me. It was Galland but he was quite a distance away. During this moment I forgot to look behind me and my aircraft was hit in the radiator. Behind me were 12 Spitfires<sup>1</sup>. I thought, "This is it! It's over!" The Spitfires had been following Galland but I became their victim instead. After five minutes, by which time I had flown almost as far as the coast of England, all the coolant had leaked out. I chose not to crash-land as I didn't want to deliver my aircraft to the British, so I baled out. When the parachute opened, my first thought was that the packer had done his job well for I had clear memories of a *Lt.* Böttcher<sup>2</sup> who had baled out but whose parachute had failed to open.

When I landed, I could see the wreckage of my aircraft which had made a hole in the ground nearby. I burned my map and ate my dextrose tablets until a lorry with 12 soldiers arrived. They took my flare pistol and then handed it back to me so that I could unload it. I was taken to a farm where, except for my shirt, I had to undress. I had in my pocket some photos of soccer players which I had collected and the soldiers took these. Then they asked for my watch, which was not a *Luftwaffe*-issue flight watch but my own personal property. As it was hidden under my shirt sleeve, I said I didn't have one and was able to retain it throughout my captivity.

Then two policemen arrived to collect me and I remember being surprised that they drove on the left-hand side of the road. I was taken to Hyde Park in London where I was placed in a room with other pilots. We sometimes spoke too freely and I think our conversations were picked up by hidden microphones. When I was taken for questioning, the interrogating officer kept playing with his pistol in a threatening way, trying to intimidate me, and when I was being returned to my cell, a sergeant kicked me in the rear. I was interrogated again several times<sup>3</sup> and then I was taken to a factory in Manchester where we experienced some air raids, during which we were forced into the cellar. Eventually we were taken to Scotland and put aboard the *Duchess of York* with other prisoners and sent to various PoW camps in Canada where we were treated very badly. At one time our daily calorie intake was reduced from 2000 to 800 calories and prisoners were subjected to corporal punishment, including being suspended by their arms for long periods of time.

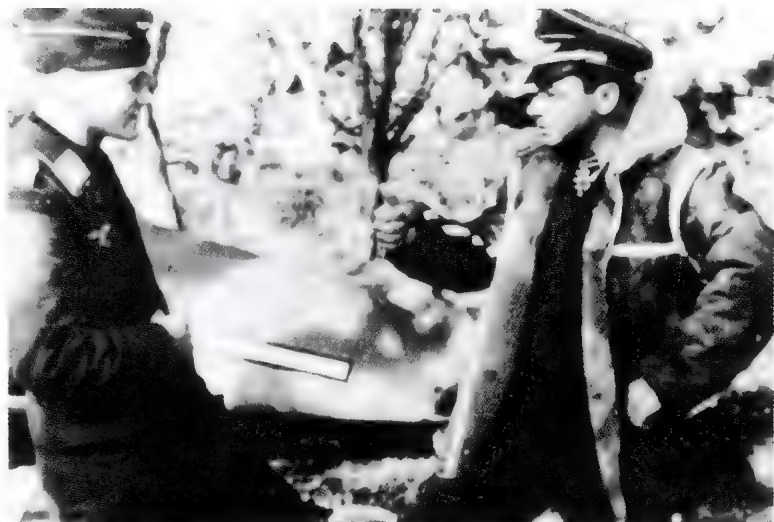
After the war, we returned to England where we were questioned on various subjects, such as what we thought of concentration camps. Sarcastically, I replied that during the Boer War it was the British who had first set up such camps and was punished for my answer. Six months later there was another interrogation and I tried to be more careful with my answers but again my sarcastic attitude placed me in confinement, so it was not until the Spring of 1947 that I was finally released.

1. Although Jäckel mentions here that he was shot down by Spitfires, when originally interrogated in 1940 he said he had been shot down by Hurricanes which attacked from either side. The authors believe he was in fact the victim of the Hurricanes of 17 Sqn.  
 2. The authors have been unable to find any record of a *Lt.* Böttcher flying with JG 26 at this time. *Herr* Jäckel is probably referring to *Lt.* Hermann Ripke, also of 8./JG 26, who baled out over England on 25 October, just four days before Jäckel. *Lt.* Ripke's parachute failed to open and his body was found near Sevenoaks in Kent, five miles from his crashed machine.  
 3. The interrogation report for Jäckel confirms that, apart from stating he had been attacked by Hurricanes, he refused to say anything.



# September-October 1940

**BELOW:** Officers of I./JG 52 at Coquelles, near Calais, in mid-August 1940. By the end of the war JG 52 achieved the greatest number of victories of all the Jagdgeschwader, but the loss-rate among pilots was enormous. By the end of October 1940, three of the men seen here would either be killed, missing or PoW. From left to right, Lt. Förster, Oblt. Kurt Kirchner of 1. Staffel (PoW 30 September 1940, Lt. Christoph Geller of 2. Staffel (MIA 30 August 1940), Oblt. Ulrich Steinhilper of 3. Staffel (PoW 27 October 1940), Lt. Hein, and Oblt. Karl-Heinz Leemann, later killed in action on 25 July 1943 as Kommandeur of III./JG 1.

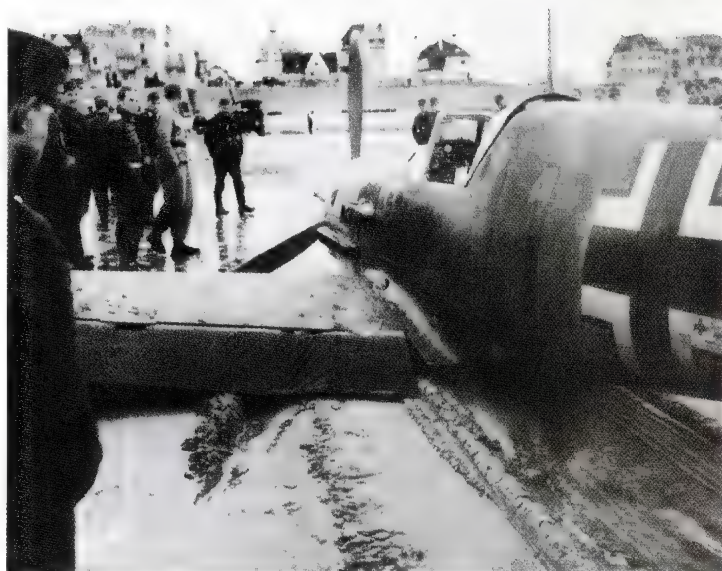
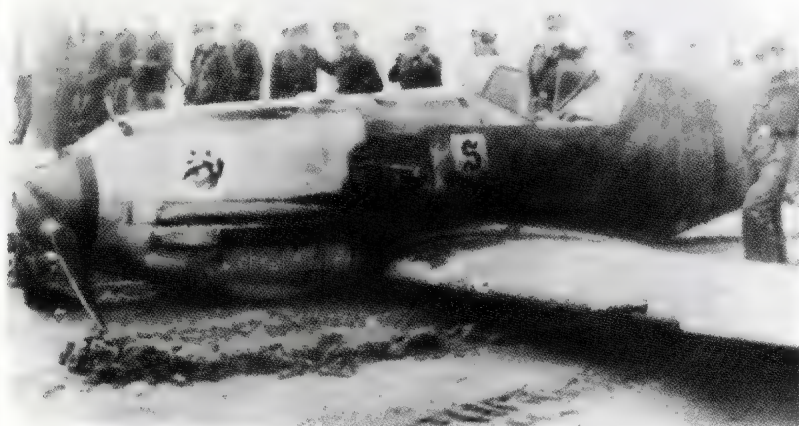


**ABOVE:** Lt Julius Meimberg (left) and Oblt. "Assi" Hahn of 4./JG 2 at Mardijk in late-September 1940. In this photograph Oblt. Hahn is wearing his Ritterkreuz, awarded on 20 September following his twentieth victory. On 29 October, Hahn became Kommandeur of III./JG 2. Meimberg, who by the end of 1940 had claimed nine Abschüsse, did not receive his Ritterkreuz until 24 October 1944 but, like Hahn, had an outstanding career with the Jagdwaffe.

**BELOW:** The Staffelkapitän of 4./JG 2, Hptm. Hans Hahn (centre), with (second left) Ofw. Siegfried Schnell, in mid-October. The aircraft nearest the camera is Ofw. Schnell's, with thirteen Luftsiege marked on the rudder.







ABOVE AND RIGHT: On 29 September, the *Staffelkapitän* of 2./JG 26, Oblt. Fritz Losigkeit, crash-landed his Bf 109 E-4 'Red 1', W.Nr.2767, on the beach near Cap Gris-Nez as a result of engine trouble. The aircraft was 15% damaged.

## "I aimed to hit the aircraft, not the pilot..."

FRITZ LOSIGKEIT, STAFFELKAPITÄN OF 2./JG 26.

After my Spanish adventure, I had a rest in Kitzbühel before being transferred to I./JG 26 in Köln-Ostheim and on 23 September 1939, I took over the 2. *Staffel* from *Hptm.* Walter Kienitz. In May 1940 we were stationed at Bönninghardt and our first mission of the campaign was to escort Ju 52s with paratroops to Rotterdam and Dordrecht. Then the *Geschwader* Staff and the I. *Gruppe* transferred to Eindhoven. Later still, we transferred to Laon, where we learned of the successful conclusion of the campaign. I had been able to claim a Spitfire on 28 May over the eastern Channel, and another one on 1 June near Dunkirk. In July, I received the EK II. Then we returned to Dortmund and then to Bönninghardt. After a short rest, we transferred first to Wissant on the Channel then, shortly after this, we became based in Audembert near Wissant (between cap Gris-Nez and Cap Blanc-Nez) for the Battle of Britain. These days were terrible: we flew continuously, sometimes five missions a day, and during the campaign against England I personally flew far more than 100 missions. There were only a few missions when I did not fly with my men. I obtained my first victory of the Battle, a Hurricane, on 28 August 1940 and the second (my third Spitfire) two days later. On both occasions, my wingman, *Lt.* Martin Rysavy also scored. It was Rysavy who took over the *Staffel* after my departure. He would later lose his life in tragic circumstances, being shot down on 2 July 1941 by our own Flak.

On 15 September, the *Luftwaffe* suffered heavy losses. At that time, our target was changed. Previously our goal had been to destroy the RAF and in this we had met with some success, but now London became the main target and this allowed the RAF to regain its strength. On the afternoon of the 15th, a large number of bombers was sent to London and our *Geschwader* received the order to fly a *freie Jagd* in the area to protect them.

Galland led the unit and we were flying at 10,000 metres when we suddenly spotted many black dots approaching our *Zweimots* (twin-engined aircraft). We dived towards them in order to take up a position between the British fighters and our bombers and this resulted in an incredible air battle in which I shot down a Spitfire<sup>1</sup>. I aimed to hit the aircraft, not the pilot, for I considered those who aimed for the pilot murderers. I tried to shoot at the base of the wing where the fuel and hydraulics were located, the pilot being protected from the rear by his armour. Although our *Geschwader* claimed several *Abschüsse*, our bombers nevertheless suffered heavy losses.

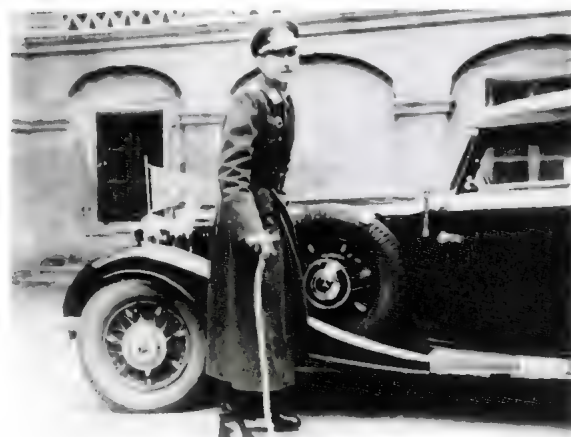
Progressively, with the arrival of autumn and winter, the tension diminished and our unit was withdrawn from the Channel coast to Abbeville. Surprisingly, during the winter, Galland called me and asked if I would be interested in going to Japan as the *Luftwaffe's* Air Attaché. I agreed and was sent to Tokyo in May 1941<sup>2</sup>.

1. Believed to have been flown by P/O R.H. Holland of 92 Sqn., who baled out safely but was injured on landing.

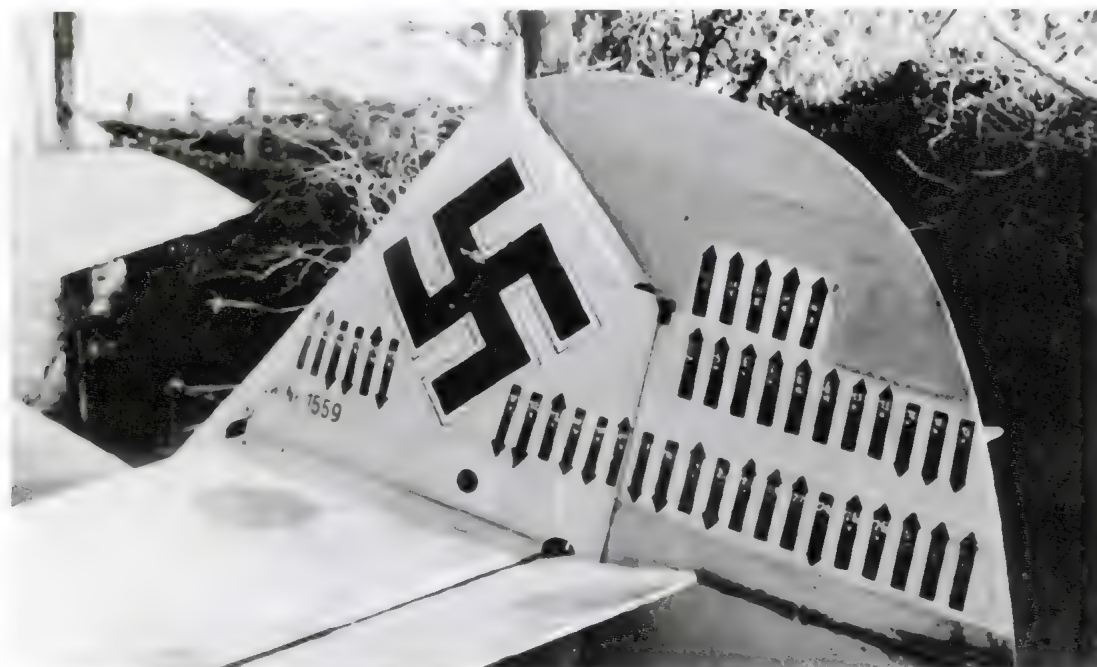
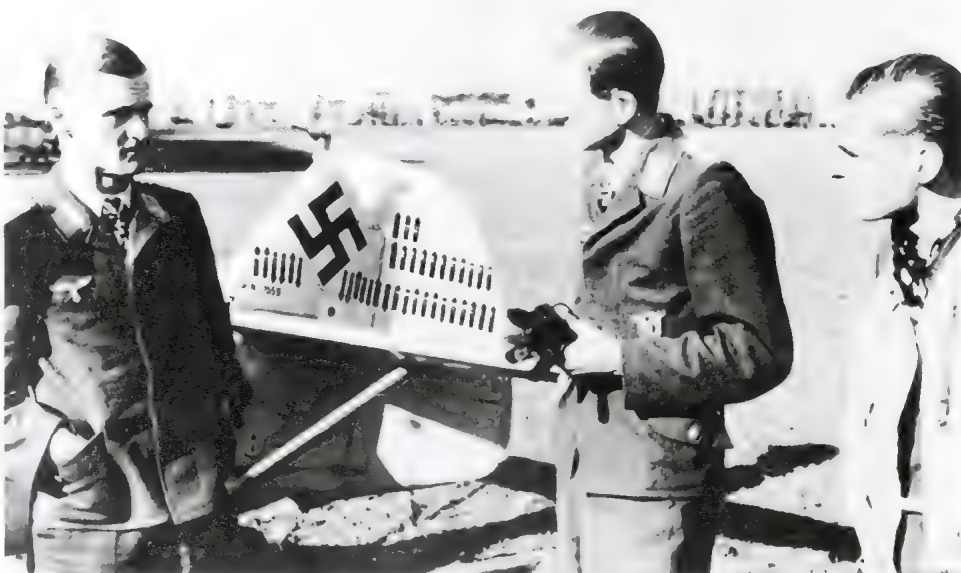
2. An account of Fritz Losigkeit's time as *Luftwaffe* Air Attaché in Japan will appear in a future part of this series.



**RIGHT:** Pilots of 5./JG 3 at Bereitschaft, or readiness, playing cards to pass the time until the next mission. From the left: Uffz. Walter Ohlrogge, Ofw. Horst Götz (wounded in action 28/8/40, killed in action 29/10/40), Uffz. Josef Heinzeller, Uffz. Fritz Mias, Lt. Horst Biddenhagen (killed 25/6/41) and unknown. Interestingly, 'Altmeister' ('Old Master') Ohlrogge was one of the oldest pilots in the Luftwaffe. He was born in 1909, was awarded the Ritterkreuz in November 1941 with 39 victories and finished the war flying the Me 262 with JG 7, at which time he had 83 victories. The aircraft in the background, 'White 1', is the machine belonging to Hptm. Alfred Müller, Staffelfkapitän of 4./JG 3.



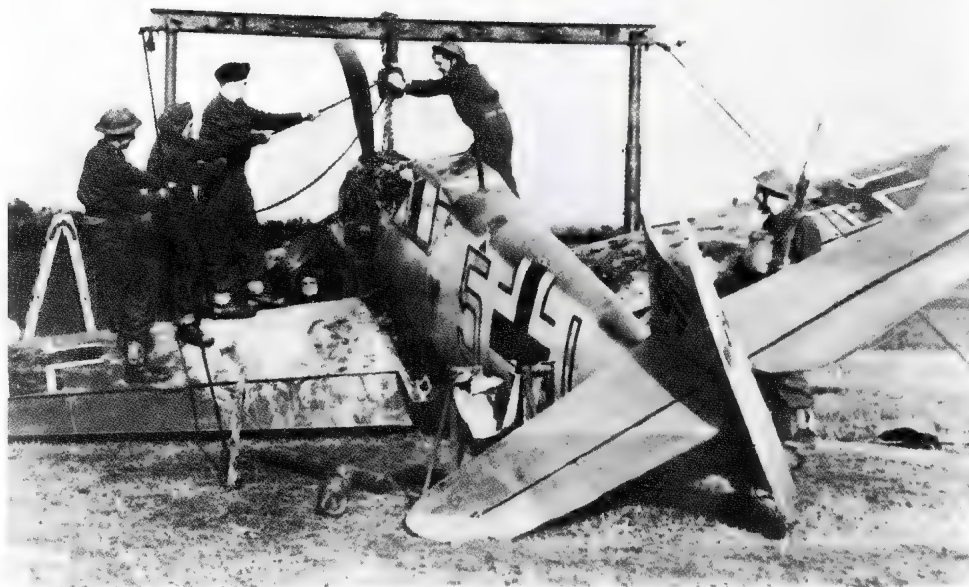
**ABOVE:** On 1 September, Hptm. Wilhelm Balthasar became Kommandeur of III./JG 3. Three days later, on 4 September, the Gruppe took off to escort bombers to Canterbury but before reaching the target, became involved in an air battle over England with 222 Sqn. In this action, Balthasar achieved his 24th Abschuss but, in the same combat, his aircraft received hits in the cockpit area and he was wounded in the leg. Nevertheless, Balthasar managed to fly back to his base where he made a perfect landing. Fifteen days later, although still not fully recovered - hence the need for the walking-stick in this photograph - Balthasar rejoined his unit and claimed five more victories including two Spitfires on 23 September and two more on 29 October. Only in November did he return to hospital to give his wounds the opportunity to heal.



**ABOVE AND LEFT:** A particular custom within JG 3 was the identification of air and ground victories by upward and downward pointing arrows. This (**LEFT**) is the tail of W.Nr.1559, the Bf 109 E-4 flown by Hptm. Wilhelm Balthasar, Gruppenkommandeur of III./JG 3 in September 1940, and is marked with a total of 41 Abschussbalken, of which twenty-seven represent air-to-air victories, the twenty-seventh being claimed on 27 September 1940, the same day that the Gruppen Adjutant of III./JG 3, Hptm. Herbert Eggers, also scored the Gruppe's 100th victory. Balthasar had previously been Staffelfkapitän of 7./JG 27 and when he was given command of III./JG 3 on 28 August, he brought his aircraft, with him. Here (**ABOVE**) Balthasar is probably still recuperating from leg wounds received on 4 September. On the left of the picture is the Kommodore of JG 3, Walter Lützow, and on the right is Oblt. Egon Troha, Staffelfkapitän of 9./JG 3, who was shot down and taken PoW on 29 October.



British troops removing Oblt. Egon Troha's aircraft from West Court Farm where it forced landed on 29 October 1940 after being attacked by Spitfires from 74 Sqn. 9./JG 3 was flying a freie Jagd patrol when attacked and Oblt. Troha, who thought his Rottenhund was protecting his rear, received radiator damage from a Spitfire which was on his tail. He made a good forced landing and was taken prisoner.



**Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-3 of 9./JG 3 flown by Oblt. Egon Troha 'Yellow 5',** was the Bf 109 E-3 flown on 29 September 1940 by Oblt. Egon Troha of 9./JG 3 when he was attacked by 74 Sqn. Spitfires and forced landed near Shepherdsweil. Finished in a high demarcation pattern of 02/71 the blue 65 of the fuselage sides was dirty in places but it carried no discernible mottling. The cowl and rudder were painted yellow and the spinner was quartered in black-green and white. The battleaxe emblem of III./JG 3 was carried on each side of the cowl with the name 'Erika' in white on the starboard side, and the 9. Staffel seahorse emblem appeared on the fuselage. There were five black Abschussbalken on each side of the rudder, two with RAF roundels, and between the second and third bars was a black top hat inside a red gunsight ring. When interrogated, Oblt. Troha maintained this was not his aircraft and, apart from the Staffel's seahorse crest, all decorations on the machine were purely personal ones of its usual pilot.

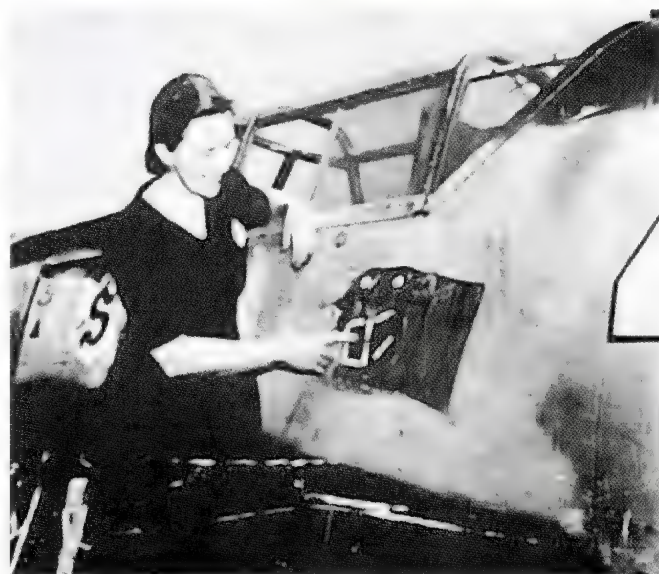
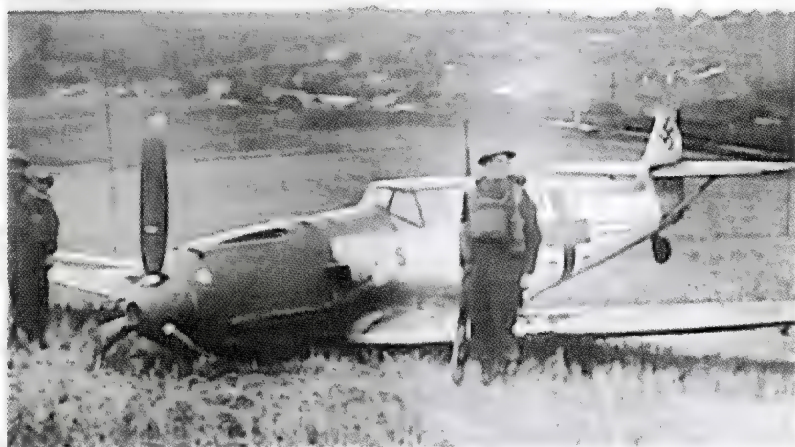






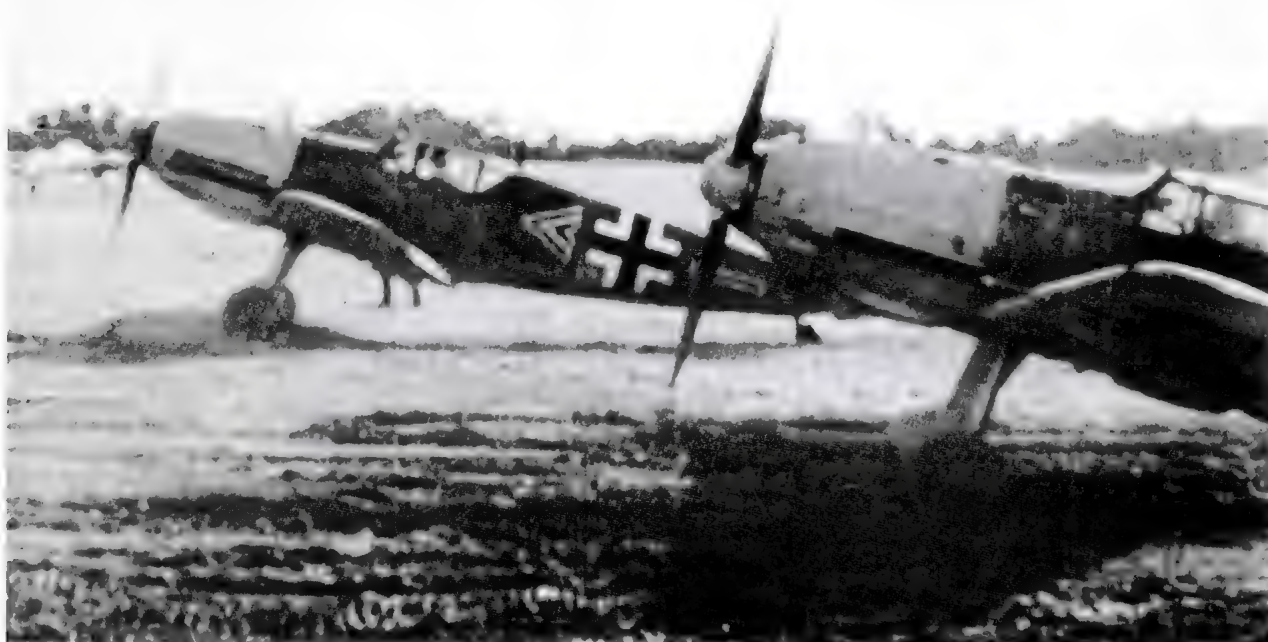
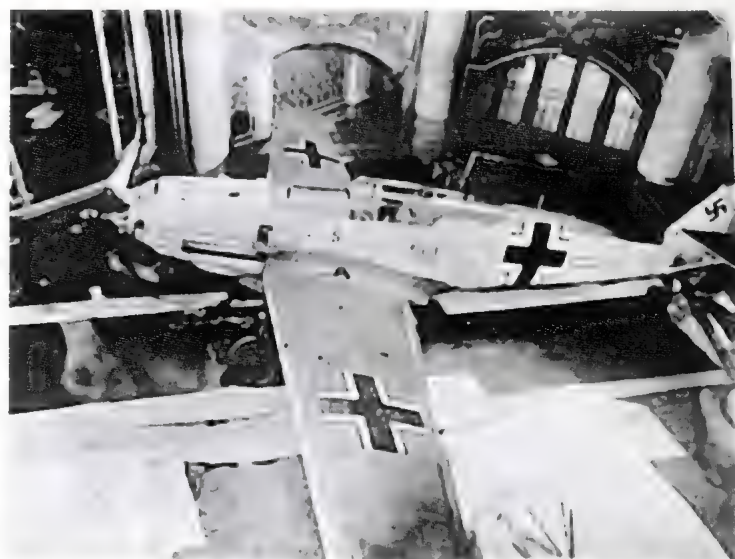
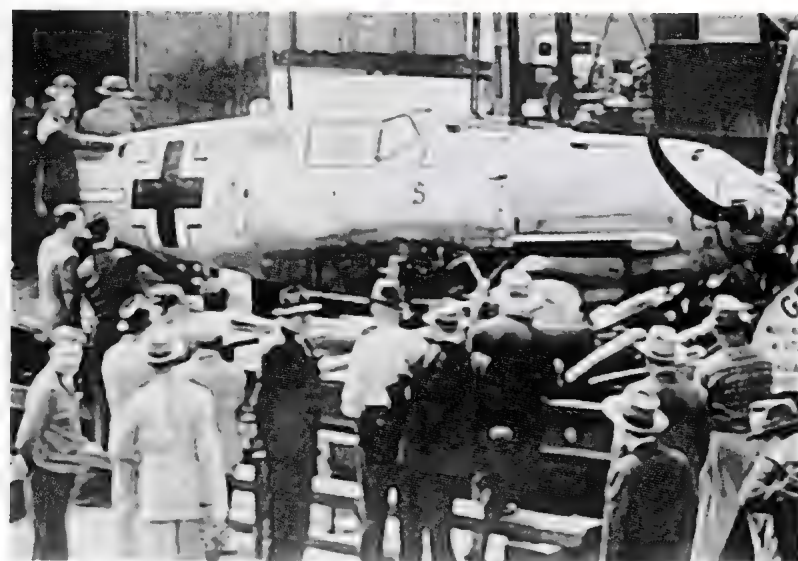
### Messerschmitt Bf 109 E-3, W.Nr. 1190 of 4./JG 26 flown by Uffz. Horst Perez

'White 4' is a Battle of Britain veteran that survives to this day. On 30 September, Horst Perez was supposed to be part of a bomber escort but either he or the bombers missed the rendezvous and, circling north of Eastbourne, his group of Bf 109s was attacked by Spitfires. Making for the coast, the Bf 109s were again intercepted and the cooling system in Perez aircraft was hit. The aircraft came down at East Dean with the undercarriage retracted and without any severe damage, but as Uffz. Perez climbed from the cockpit he was shot and wounded in the jaw and hand. Once removed from the crash site, the aircraft was sent to Canada for display during 1941 before travelling to the USA, eventually returning to England some years later. It currently resides in the Imperial War Museum collection at Duxford, Cambridgeshire. When shot down, this aircraft showed signs of recent repainting and detailed examination of surviving sections of original paint prove it was finished in non-standard locally mixed greys on the upper surfaces and not the 74/75 as described in previously published accounts. In similar fashion, the fin, lower fuselage and undersides carried several coats of paint in widely differing shades of 65 and pale blue.



ABOVE LEFT: Uffz. Horst Perez aircraft under armed guard after forced landing at East Dean, near Eastbourne, in Sussex. (LEFT) Perez 'White 4' was previously flown by Hptm. Karl Ebbighausen and the 5 Abschussbalken on the tail represented Ebbighausen's claims, not Perez. (ABOVE AND OPPOSITE TOP PAGE) Various views of Perez aircraft during its tour of the US and Canada.





*ABOVE:* Two yellow-nosed Bf 109s from II./JG 2 taxi out at the start of a new mission in late September. The aircraft in the background carries the double-chevron marking of the Gruppenkommandeur, Hptm. Karl-Heinz Greisert, who took command of the Gruppe on 3 September. Oblt. Greisert's first victory, a Fairey Battle, was claimed during the French campaign



*RIGHT:* Oblt. Hans "Assi" Hahn (centre), the Kommandeur of III./JG 2, photographed with Werner Machold (right) in October 1940. On 2 September, Machold was the eighth Jagdflieger to reach 20 victories and on 5 September he received the Ritterkreuz and was promoted to officer rank on account of his personal success.



# September-October 1940



Ground crews of 7./JG 2, probably photographed at Cherbourg in late September or early October. In the photograph (BELOW) the engine cowlings of a newly-delivered aircraft, probably a Bf 109 E-7, are being painted yellow and the Staffel emblem applied, while the view (RIGHT) shows an SC 250 being loaded.

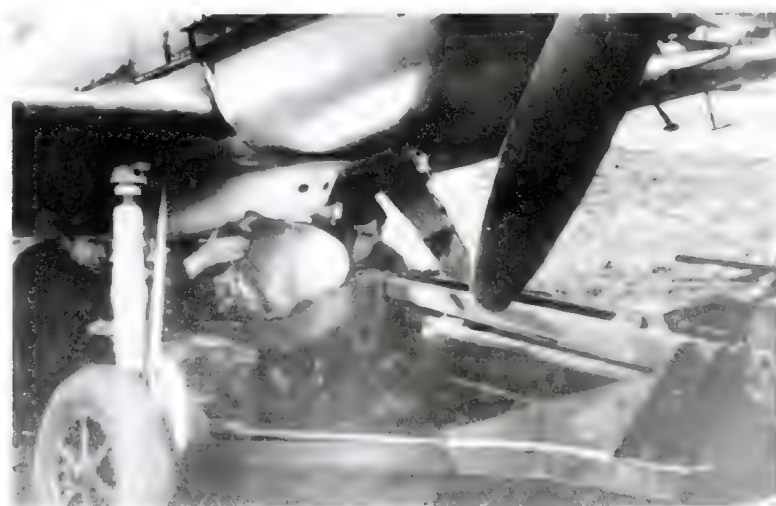






*LEFT:* A Jabo from Oblt. Heinz Ebeling's 9./JG 26 preparing to taxi with a 250 kg bomb loaded beneath the fuselage, Caffiers, October 1940. The 'Hellhound' emblem, just visible beneath the cockpit, was black edged in red. Oblt. Ebeling himself collided with his wingman during a mission to England on 5 November and was taken prisoner. It was Ebeling's 96th war flight and, on the same day, he was awarded the Ritterkreuz.

*BELOW:* A 250 kg practice bomb being loaded



*ABOVE:* An SC 250 mounted in position beneath a Bf 109 E. A ring has been welded to the nose of the bomb to slow its penetration into soft ground and so maximise blast effect.



*RIGHT:* Bombing-up a Bf 109 Jabo of II/JG 54.





*ABOVE:* Mechanics loading a bomb on a Bf 109 E-4 of JG 54, early September 1940.



*LEFT:* Ground personnel loading a Jabo from 2./JG 52 with a 250 kg bomb, October 1940. While many of the Bf 109 fighter units were based on field aerodromes, the heavy loads carried by the Jabo Staffeln required a smooth surface. The 2./JG 52 was therefore based at St. Ingelvert, one of the few airfields in the area with a surface suitable for Jabo operations.



# Sector and other fighter airfields South East England, 1940





## The Opposition

SGT. ALAN STUART HARKER, (BRITISH) 234 SQN., RAF.

**D**espite claiming eight victories during the Summer of 1940, one of the lesser-known RAF pilots who flew during the Battle of Britain was Sgt. Alan Stuart Harker of 234 Squadron. Born on 16 July 1916 in Bolton, Lancashire, Alan Harker began pilot training when he joined the RAFVR in October 1937. His first solo flight - in a De Havilland Tiger Moth on 12 March 1938 - lasted all of five minutes, Harker afterwards writing in his logbook, "Whew, what a relief to be down in one piece."

On 1 September 1939, Alan Harker was officially called up for service and on the 12th he was posted to 10 FTS at Ternhill, Shropshire, flying Avro Ansons. When his training was completed, Alan Harker was posted on 5 November 1939 to the newly reformed 234 Sqn. at Leconfield, Humber, a fighter squadron originally intended for shipping protection duties which operated a mixture of Blenheims, Battles and Gauntlets. Alan Harker flew the squadron's Bristol Blenheims, but in March 1940 234 Sqn. began to receive Spitfires and became operational in May.

On 10 August Harker landed at St. Eval, Cornwall, with the undercarriage of his aircraft still retracted. Although he could hear the control tower shouting at him over the radio to lower his wheels, he was so exhausted that he was unable to respond. Nevertheless, he was summarily reprimanded by the squadron CO for carelessness which resulted in Category 2 damage to Spitfire P9468.

On 14 August, 234 Sqn. moved to the airfield at Middle Wallop and into the thick of the action, the airfield being bombed all that afternoon by He 111s and Ju 88s. The next day 234 Sqn., together with the Hurricanes of 43 Sqn., was ordered off to intercept a raid on Portland being conducted by Ju 87s escorted by Bf 110s and 60 Bf 109s. While 43 Sqn. attacked the Bf 110s and Ju 87s, 234 Sqn. attacked the Bf 109s but a single squadron could do little against the Messerschmitts and it was overwhelmed by numbers. Three of the squadron's Spitfires were lost and Sgt. Harker considered himself fortunate to escape with his life. This experience was obviously taken as a salutary warning for on the 16th, when Alan Harker was chased by three yellow-nosed Bf 109s, he obviously decided that discretion was the better part of valour and, determined to be more careful, took refuge in cloud. One interesting aspect of the fighting on the 15th and 16th was that the squadron received false R/T messages from the Germans ordering it to 'Pancake' (land immediately).

Sgt. Harker's first victory came on 18 August when Ju 87s attacked the airfields at Gosport, Ford and Thorney Island. While three other RAF squadrons attacked the dive-bombers, 234 Sqn. engaged the Bf 109 fighter escort provided by I. and II./JG 27. In the air battle which ensued, no fewer than 16 Ju 87s were shot down and of the six Bf 109s which JG 27 lost that day, two were claimed by Sgt. Harker and witnessed by P/O Gordon.

On 4 September, 234 Sqn. was patrolling near Tangmere when it was ordered eastwards where it encountered the Bf 110s of III./ZG 76. In the running battle which followed, several pilots from 234 Sqn. claimed to have destroyed Bf 110s, Sgt. Harker claiming one which he saw crash near Brighton. His logbook for the day contains an entry stating that the squadron shot down all 15 aircraft in a German defensive circle, but while it is true that the *Luftwaffe* lost no fewer than 17 Bf 110s on this day, only six were from III./ZG 76 - the Gruppe attacked by 234 Sqn. - and there were also a number of other Spitfire and Hurricane squadrons operating in the same area.

On the 6th, Sgt. Harker claimed two Bf 109s destroyed, both of which crashed near Eastbourne, plus two damaged, the kills being confirmed by Sqn. Ldr. J. S. O'Brien who also claimed two Bf 109s himself. Events on the 7th did not go so well for the squadron, although Sgt. Harker claimed another two Bf 109s plus another damaged. Confirmation was provided by P/O R.E.T. Doe, 234 Squadron's top scoring pilot and one of only 17 pilots with ten or more kills during the Battle of Britain. However, two of the squadron's pilots were lost including the CO, Sqn. Ldr. O'Brien. An odd entry which appears in Alan Harker's logbook for this day mentions that he attacked a "German-flown Hurricane on P/O Doe's tail."

Sgt. Harker claimed another victory on 22 September, a dull and foggy day in which the *Luftwaffe* sent a Ju 88 from 4.(F)/121 to carry out a weather reconnaissance flight. Sgt. Harker shot down this aircraft and saw it crash in flames into the sea 25 miles south-east of Lands End. Although his logbook states there were no survivors, the crew was in fact picked up by a trawler after ten hours in their dinghy. Harker claimed another Ju 88 damaged on 15 October. He was awarded the DFM on 22 October and was commissioned in March 1941.

At Warmwell on 1 April 1941, Harker was wounded in the arm during a low-level attack by He 111s, and on 19 May he was shot down while carrying out a convoy patrol off Weymouth and crash-landed in a field near Warmwell.

On 4 August 1941 Harker was posted to 53 OTU at Llanlow as a Flight Commander, and from 27 June 1942 was a gunnery instructor at the Central Gunnery School at Sutton Bridge before moving to Llanbedr in December 1943 to form a Rocket Projectile School.

Posted to Italy on 5 July 1944, Harker then served as Motor Transport Officer with a mobile radar unit and was then Operations Officer with an American Liberator squadron and later a Polish squadron, both of which were engaged in supply-dropping operations. Released from the RAF as a Flight Lieutenant in November 1945, Alan Harker returned to civilian life and became a heating engineer. He died on 6 August 1996.



Sgt. Alan Harker of 234 Sqn., the motto of which was, *Ignem mortemque despuimus* (We Spit Fire and Death).



Sgt. Alan Harker seated in Spitfire AZ-N of 234 Sqn., probably (RIGHT) at St. Eval in Cornwall, in August/September 1940. In this later photograph (BELOW) believed taken in October, the original aircraft name has been painted out and replaced with the name 'Nellore', a city in south-east India which had raised a financial contribution towards the cost of this aircraft. At about the time of this photograph, Sgt. Harker was awarded the DFM in recognition of his achievements in the Battle of Britain when, as may be seen from the row of swastikas under the windscreen, he claimed eight enemy aircraft destroyed. He was commissioned in May 1941.





## SGT. BOHUMIR FURST, (CZECHOSLOVAKIAN) 310 SQN., RAF

A total of 88 Czech volunteers served with the RAF during the Battle of Britain, at first being absorbed into Regular and Auxiliary squadrons. Later, Fighter Command formed two special squadrons almost entirely composed of Czech personnel, the first, No. 310 Sqn., forming at Duxford on 10 July 1940. The squadron became operational on 18 August and its first combat occurred on 26 August when it claimed three enemy aircraft destroyed for the loss of three Hurricanes, the pilots of which were unhurt. No. 310 Sqn. retained the code letters 'NN' until its repatriation to Czechoslovakia in 1946.

This photograph shows Sgt. Bohumir Furst who served with the pre-war Czech Air Force until the final German occupation in March 1939, at which time he escaped to join l'Armée de l'Air and, during the French campaign, shared in the destruction of an Hs 126 and the probable destruction of a Do 17. After the fall of France, Furst made his way to England and, in August 1940, was one of the first pilots to join the newly-formed 310 Sqn. During the Battle, Sgt. Furst claimed a Bf 110, a Bf 109 and an He 111. He was later commissioned, received the Czech Military Cross, and after leaving the RAF in 1946 as a Flight Lieutenant, returned to Czechoslovakia.

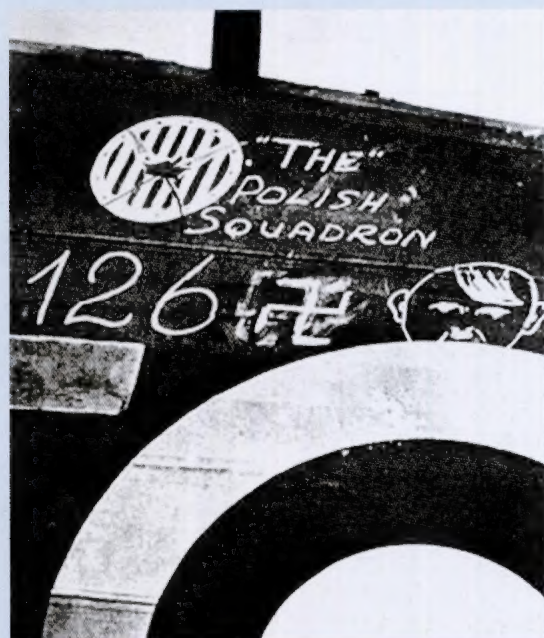


## SGT. JOSEF FRANTISEK, (CZECHOSLOVAKIAN) 303 (POLISH) SQN., RAF

Josef Frantisek left his homeland in 1938 when the Germans occupied the Sudetenland - the western border of Czechoslovakia - and flew to Poland where he joined the Polish Air Force. Frantisek is believed to have shot down some German aircraft during the subsequent invasion of Poland in September 1939, and after the German conquest of Poland, escaped to Romania where he was interned. However, he escaped and via the Balkans and Syria, eventually arrived in France, just as the German invasion of that country began. Joining a French Air Force fighter squadron, Frantisek is believed to have destroyed 11 enemy aircraft, for which he was awarded the French *Croix de Guerre*.

When France fell, Frantisek escaped to England and joined 303 Sqn. which was formed in July from Polish personnel evacuated from France, the squadron becoming operational soon afterwards with Hurricanes. Frantisek claimed his first kill of the Battle, a Bf 109, on 2 September and thereafter claimed regularly, sometimes destroying two aircraft on the same day and on 11 September claimed two Bf 109s and an He 111. Not including claims made while flying with the French Air Force, his final total was 17 confirmed (six bombers, two Bf 110s and nine Bf 109s), making him the highest scorer of the Battle of Britain. This feat is all the more remarkable since it was achieved in less than a month, his last kill being a Bf 109 on 30 September. He was awarded the DFM by King George VI personally.

As with several other well-known flying personalities, Frantisek was killed not in combat but during a routine patrol, his Hurricane crashing at Ewell, Surrey, due to unknown causes on 20 September 1940, ironically just three days before 303 Sqn. was withdrawn to the quieter 12 Group area. He was posthumously awarded the Polish *Virtuti Militari* (5th Class), the *Krzyz Walecznych* and three Bars, and the Czech Military Cross.



LEFT: Fuselage of a 303 Sqn. Hurricane showing the Squadron badge, transferred from the Polish Air Force. The chalked number 126 refers to the number of enemy aircraft the squadron claimed destroyed.